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Molière

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MOLIÈRE

TRANSLATED BY

KATHARINE PRESCOTT WORMELEY

VOL. II.

TARTUFFE
LES PRÉCIEUSES RIDICULES
GEORGE DANDIN

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1894

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INTRODUCTION

CRITICISM BY C. A. SAINTE-BEUVE[1]

PASCAL, when he wrote "Les Provinciales," was thinking, before all else, of outraged Christian morality. It was that which he desired to avenge and to re-establish, at the cost and to the confusion of its corrupters. But by addressing the world in the tone of the world he obtained a result he little looked for; he hastened the establishment of what I call the morality of honest men; which is not, strictly speaking, Christian morality,— although the latter counts for much in the origin of it, for in what it has of best it may be said to be Christianity rationalized, or rather, *utilized;* that is, turned into a condition of useful social practice.

[1] Selected and abridged from Sainte-Beuve's "Port-Royal," chapters xv. and xvi. Hachette et Cie, 1860.

Should this new aspect of the public mind and habits be considered progress? Socially, it certainly is; but if we speak of the inner being, and more profoundly, it may be doubtful. Pascal says: "The inventions of men go on advancing from age to age, but the goodness and the malignancy of the world in general remain the same." That is an essential corrective which I should like to see inscribed at the head of all great theories of progress. Nevertheless, the morality of the honest man, left to itself in ordinary times, judges soundly, and is found of its own will, wherever possible, on the side of eternal law. This morality, which is that of the sober medium of society, will be found in a vague and tentative form at various periods of our history. Under the burgher form it upheld Charles V. and Louis XII.; it acquired consistency more especially under Henri IV.; and in the reign of Louis XIV. it asked no better than to gather itself together once more after the miserable disorders and scandals of the Fronde. Its power is never better seen than when it deals with false piety, false morality, which, behind the mask of austerity, is corrupt, calculating, and covetous.

Two men, two writers, under the last-named reign, had the courage and the honor to protest in the name of this morality of honest men against the hypocrisies of false, jesuitical piety. Molière and La Bruyère dared to do this; both took up and used in their own manner, and with their own genius, the weapons which Pascal had been the first to invent. The author of "Tartuffe" and the painter of "Onuphre" were, in that respect, the direct successors and heirs of Pascal and his "Provinciales." Molière divined and denounced the evil almost before it was in sight. He seems, indeed, to have seen the Hypocrite, advancing slowly, at the most splendid period of the great reign, anticipating the monarch's old age, gloating over him already as a prey, and mysteriously certain of his power.

Molière came to Paris in 1658, and in the following year opened his career of glory with "Les Précieuses Ridicules." Without foreseeing it, he brought strong help to Pascal, who little knew in what way and from what quarter an auxiliary was approaching. By "Les Précieuses" Molière gave a deathblow to the false taste in "Clélie;" he saw it revive in other forms, but never again in the one he thus laid

low. The thunder of applause which greeted "Les Précieuses" swept away for a time all mists and cleared the literary horizon. "Courage, Molière! this is true comedy," said an old man in the audience.

In 1664 "Tartuffe," such as we now have it, was almost finished. Three acts were played before the king at Versailles, and the whole piece was performed for the Prince de Condé at Raincy. But before touching slightly on the comedy of "Tartuffe," let us turn to the man and to the genius in its author.

Molière, like Montaigne, is *nature itself;* and I may add, speaking from our present point of view, he stands for the morality of honest men. But if he is, like Montaigne, nature itself, I shall venture to say that his nature is richer and, above all, more generous. Nature in him is not, as it is in Montaigne, in a frequent condition of sceptical nonchalance, of malicious and rather irritating shrewdness, — vigorous, no doubt, but with a vigor that amuses and dissipates itself in trifles; gifted with genius and invention, but chiefly in the details of thought and expression. Molière renders nature, but nature more generous, broader, more frank; nature in open action, not shut within, strong

in thought, ardent in contemplation but without petty or puerile curiosity. We feel at every step a fruitful and creative force, which knows itself and its every faculty, yet without limiting or regulating itself by theory, — a force which sees all faults and contradictions and weaknesses, but is capable, in spite of that, of falling into them; a thing that seems to me much finer, certainly richer, than the care-taking self-interest which succeeds in never making a false step.

Molière appears to me to represent nature with as thorough an acceptance and a more sovereign power than Montaigne, who analyzed it too closely. He seems to me to hold that office and fulfil that idea as much as Shakespeare, the greatest (in the poetic order) of purely natural men. Shakespeare, as a dramatic writer, has, far more than Molière, the tragic and pathetic chords; which the latter often sought without being able to grasp them powerfully. But, if we add to Molière's talent his soul, we shall find him supplied with that pathetic inner being, that sad, grave bitterness that we see in Shakespeare. Writer of comedy as he was, his nature was serious rather than sportive. Sadness lay at his heart; also warmth of feeling. Laughing at humanity as he did,

he loved humanity — which is perhaps an inconsistency, but one that is nobly natural. He has, too, his moments of extravagance and devotion. He seems to me, in all these traits and others, to be the complete expression of what I have called the morality of honest men. That morality was the sap within him; it caused him to create his "Tartuffe" through indignation, just as, in the world, it makes the play a fresh triumph at all recurring periods of hypocrisy.

Yes, Molière was sad; more so than Pascal, whom we picture to ourselves as melancholy. He was more truly melancholy at heart, with far less compensation. He had measured and judged, on all sides and in all directions, the things of this life, — honors, birth, quality, wealth, marriage, customs; he knew the other side of that fine tapestry, the hollowness of the planks on which he trod. Young, he had yielded, irresistibly, to the double tendency which led him to a single enthusiasm, — the theatre, and love. He asked for nothing so much as to bind his heart to some beloved object on the stage where his genius reigned. But love only enticed, insulted, wronged him, and made him suffer. His talent alone was

faithful to him, and his fame — but what was that to him? the happiness he wanted fled him.

So, more and more, he gave himself up, by predilection, by necessity, by way of consolation, to that talent, that genius, which at each bound only doubled its resources and its vigor. But when all around him, court, society, people, town, rang with the laughter and the applause that he provoked, he, the Contemplator, amid the lively evil he turned to ridicule and gayety, he, like some sad solitary, saw the true evil to its full extent. It was there, behind him, in those dark shadows of his own being where habitually he dwelt. Sometimes (hark!) above that frank and joyous merriment echoing through the house, a piercing laugh is heard, a note that rises high above the key, sharp, bitter, convulsive, — Molière's own laugh, in which the man within him was revealed. Ah! who knew better than he the grandeur and the nothingness of man; the weakness and the laughable relapses into which the heart is flung by passions well known to us, but always trumphant? Who knew better than he, Molière, what human nature, humanity, is when reduced to itself alone?

I ought to ask pardon for this too serious

preface, — which I give to Tartuffe, though it seems to me as applicable to the "Misanthrope" as to the "Impostor."

In 1664 Molière had, as we have said, finished his comedy of "Tartuffe" very nearly as we now have it. Three acts were played during the fêtes of that year at Versailles; also at Villers-Cotterets, before MONSIEUR. The Prince de Condé, the protector of all fearlessness of mind, ordered the whole comedy to be played before him at Raincy. But the same men who had compelled the burning of Pascal's "Provinciales" now prevented the representation of Tartuffe in public; and the matter was held in abeyance for a long time. Louis XIV., then in the first flush of his mistresses, was by no means devout; but already he showed that strong disposition to make others so which became such a marked trait of his old age.

Molière, meanwhile, whose stage and whose genius were alike unable to lie fallow, produced other works; and in the "Festin de pierre" (performed in 1665) he revenged himself on the cabal which still suppressed "Tartuffe" by Don Juan's tirade in the fifth act. The atheist at bay tells Sganarelle that he shall pretend to be pious. "There is no longer any shame

in that," he says. Hypocrisy is now a modish vice, and modish vices pass for virtue. The character of a godly man is the best of all parts to play; in these days the profession of hypocrite has wonderful advantages." This attack, with other audacious witticisms in the "Festin" raised a further outcry, and seemed to justify the fury of the cabal; violent pamphlets were published against Molière, who now found he had to do with an intrenched camp of Jesuits.

Nevertheless, the repute of the diverting poet rose higher and higher, and his serious glory and fame were spread abroad; for by this time he had written and performed "The Misanthrope." The death of the queen-mother removed one great support of the cabal at court. Counting on the personal favor of Louis XIV., and making the most of a sort of verbal permission he had obtained, Molière risked the production of his comedy in August, 1667, during the deserted Parisian summer, while the king was in camp before Lille. He had changed the title; the play was now called "The Impostor," and Monsieur Tartuffe became Monsieur Panulphe. Even under this guise it had but one representation; the president of the Parliament thought it his duty to prevent a

second until a definite order had been obtained from the king. Molière sent two of his actors to the camp at Lille with a petition, which has come down to us; the king, however, maintained the suspension. The various petitions addressed by Molière to the king on the subject of "Tartuffe" are written in excellent prose, and are very gay and lively.

However, continuing to play his way, Molière won more and more upon the mind of Louis XIV., who remained his firm friend through life, and in truth seems to have deified himself amid the genius and the ambition that surrounded him. After "L'Amphitryon," after "L'Avare," after "George Dandin," after such laughter, what could be refused to the purveyor of these royal pleasures? "Tartuffe," resuscitated, was played in Paris February 5, 1669, and forty-four consecutive representations proved its triumph.

I am not concerned now to write an essay on "Tartuffe," and I shall only run rapidly over it, making a few reflections here and there which touch upon the subject I have in hand.

Tartuffe, such as Madame Pernelle and the family present him, appears at first sight to be somewhat uncompromising. He is not, it

would seem, a disciple of easy devotion and smooth, jesuitical casuistry. Dorine tells us: "If we listen to him and believe his maxims, we cannot do anything that is n't a crime; he censures all things, the carping zealot!" He suppresses balls, and even visits. In short, this Monsieur Tartuffe, at first sight, has the look of a rigorist. Wait, 't is only a garment; let us look farther.

In the first place, Molière did not make the portrait of his hypocrite feature by feature; he dashed it in more freely, as was his wont. Minute shades, too carefully observed and studied at all points, are better suited to satires and to pamphlets than to the stage. Tartuffe can be accommodating when it suits him; he is so with Orgon, whom he bewitched when "he came to church each morning, and, with humble air, knelt down beside him upon both his knees;" and also with Elmire, in the delicate scene of the third act, when he makes his declaration in pious language, redolent of sweetness and benignity: "The love which binds us to eternal beauties does not suppress in us all earthly love." In the famous scene of the fourth act, Tartuffe, to remove Elmire's last scruples, sums up in words, which we all know

by heart, the very essence and marrow of compromising casuistry. A moment earlier, when he accepted from the father the property of which the son was disinherited, Tartuffe had put in practice his grand method, namely, of keeping in view the intention; which simply consists in holding up as the reason of his evil actions some permissible object. "If I resolved," he says, "to receive this donation from his father, it was, to tell the truth, because I feared the property might fall into evil hands."

It is undoubtedly true that (even before Pascal) Regnier, Rabelais, Henri Estienne, and the whole sixteenth century, also the Middle-ages and the authors of the "fabliaux," and the troubadours of the "Roman de Renart" had depicted and scorned a hypocrite; but the particular form of hypocrisy in the seventeenth century, that of Compromising Casuistry, Jesuitism in short, discerned and denounced by Pascal, was caught up and developed to its highest point by Molière in the character of Tartuffe.

In Molière, more than in any other French dramatist, the stage, which he made so profoundly true, is not in the least, as to its de-

tails, an analyzed copy nor an imitation of literal and surrounding appearances. It is an original reproduction, a creation, a world. Molière is in no sense a painter of portraits; he is a painter of pictures; or rather, a producer of living beings, who are sufficiently themselves, sufficiently sure of their own being, not to step perpetually in their own footsteps or measure their conduct by any line of strict reality. Essentially human in their nature, they follow no other law (as to detail and procedure) than that of the glowing inspiration of pure comedy. They are not formalists; wanting their swing, they are not slaves to a petty rule of life. Whatever they take from the real that is most accurately true and based on fact, never rigidly incases them, but lends itself freely to their own forms, and indeed transforms itself into them.

In order to give to all of them their full play and relief, Molière is not afraid of writing his characters with a free hand. His genius is, above all else, dramatic. Dorine, who plays so lively and so essential a part in " Tartuffe," who is, in fact, its merry-making sprite, personifies to my mind, the *verve*, the glow, what I shall dare to call the fleshiness of his muse;

somewhat resembling the rosy sirens of Rubens, ever dear to that painter. Dorine, so provoking, so merry, so nimble of speech, may well serve as the type of Molière's comic muse, in all that is especially its own, invincible, and wholly detached from more reflective observation, — the type of that comic humor, I mean, in its purest flow, which assailed him, diverted him, distracted him (like his old servant-woman) in his saddest hours; making lively uproar across the surface of his habitual melancholy, the depths of which were never stirred.

Would that a genius of the same race as Molière had come among us to people in the same way another sphere, — that of the pathetic and the ideal. Then indeed would French poesy — grand French poesy — have been created. "Tartuffe," however, brought our comedy to the highest point it can ever attain. The strength of its great foundation leaves no chance for the carping criticism of purists. The public voice makes law.

But if it triumphed, as it did, by the power of its genius, the immortal play had, even in the dawn of its glory, many outrages to endure. It was not burned by the hangman, but it had to struggle against other efforts at destruction;

fulminations, too, from revered and reverend voices. Bourdaloue from his pulpit, Bossuet in his pamphlet, cried out in the name of outraged piety. The worthy Adrien Baillet, librarian of the Parliament and a friend of the Jansenists, begins an article on "J. B. Poquelin, Parisian, Dead as a Comedian" thus: "Monsieur Molière is one of the most dangerous enemies which this Age and the World have roused against the Church of Jesus Christ."

HERE is the language of Bourdaloue, Bossuet, and others to whom Sainte-Beuve, in the above "Criticism" refers: —

Bourdaloue winds up his sermon against "Tartuffe" by calling it "a damnable invention to humiliate godly men, to bring them under suspicion, and to deprive them of the liberty of declaring themselves openly in favor of virtue."

Bossuet writes: "Will you dare support in the sight of Heaven plays in which virtue and piety are held up to ridicule? Posterity may, perhaps, know the end of this poet-comedian, who died while acting, and passed from the frivolity of the stage to the judgment-seat of

Him who said, 'Woe to him who laughs, for he shall weep.'"

The rector of Saint-Barthélemy, the Abbé Roulles, calls Molière "a demon clothed in flesh, dressed as a man; a free-thinker, an impious being, deserving to be publicly burned." "Molière himself is a finished Tartuffe, a true hypocrite. If the purpose of the comedian is, as he says it is, to amend men's lives by amusing them, Molière's purpose is to ruin their souls eternally by making them laugh, — like those serpents whose deathly fangs shed a smile on the faces of those they wound."

The archbishop of Paris, Harlay de Champvallon (the same who refused Christian burial to Molière's remains), whom Fénelon, archbishop of Cambrai, in a letter to Louis XIV., calls "a corrupt archbishop, scandalous, incorrigible, false, malignant, tricky, the enemy of all virtue," issued under date of August 11, 1667, the following mandate: —

"Having received information from our vicar that on the fifth of this month was represented at one of the theatres of this city, under the new name of "The Impostor," a very dangerous comedy, which is all the more capable of injuring religion because, under pretence of

condemning hypocrisy and false devotion, it opens the way to attack those who profess the most solid piety, and exposes them to the jeers and the incessant calumnies of free-thinkers; therefore, in order to arrest the course of so great an evil, which may seduce weak minds and turn them from the paths of virtue, our said vicar advises that we forbid all persons in our diocese to represent the said comedy, under whatever name it appear, or to read it, or hear it recited either in public or in private, under pain of excommunication," etc.

Reading Molière in the present day, it seems to us well-nigh impossible that these things were ever said of him. But they are evidence of a vital fact, namely: that while the fundamental truths of the human soul in its relations both to life and to the Unseen remain forever unchanged, the ideas of the human mind in connection with such words as piety, impiety, hypocrisy, immorality, etc., change so completely as to teach the world a lesson of tolerance.

But these violent opinions were not without their antidote, even in Molière's time. Fénelon openly took his side and applauded him for "having exposed one of the most dangerous vices against true religion." As for the public,

it had but one opinion; its applause and its admiration never slackened. To this day, "Tartuffe" is played as an ever-living protest against an ever-present vice. What greater testimony can be offered to the profoundly human truths contained in this work?

It was after the first performance of "Les Précieuses Ridicules" that Molière, enlightened by its success, came to a sense of his own power and cried out: "I need no longer study Plautus and Terence, or sift Menander's fragments; I have only to study the world." This gem of comedy was first played on the 18th of November, 1659.[1] The title of the play has so passed into the English language that, even if it were possible to give a translation of it (which it is not), it would be a pity to change the familiar name. But the exact meaning of the word *Précieuse* should be given, and here is what Littré says of it: "*Précieuse*, in the favorable sense, is a woman who devotes herself to the pleasures of the intellect, and who combines refinement of language with refinement of manners. . . . In the unfavorable sense of the word, *Précieuse*

[1] Balzac was mistaken when he said in his preface that it was first played at Montpellier. The incident he relates in connection with it happened in Paris.

ridicule, it means an affectation of refinement both in manners and language. . . . Molière entitled his piece with a full recognition of the true value of the name."

To give a proper history of the play requires a brief discussion of that charming topic, the Hôtel de Rambouillet, and this will be found in the introduction to "Les Femmes Savantes" in the succeeding volume. Suffice it to say here that while Molière had no thought of attacking the true character of that coterie, any more than he attacked true religion in Tartuffe, he probably had in mind the follies of "Clélie" as well as the spurious imitations of the honored circle (then in its decline) which were springing up among all classes. So little was Molière considered, at the time, to attack the true *précieuse* that Ménage, one of the Rambouillet *habitués*, says of the first occasion when the play was acted, November 18, 1659: "I was present, and so were Mademoiselle de Rambouillet and her sister Madame de Grignan, with many others of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. The play was received with general applause; and I was so pleased myself that I saw at once the effect it would have on others." Molière's soul and his genius were too real, too true, to attack real

things; it was always excess, affectation, the false thing injuring the real thing, that he pursued. No one will say that he opposed the advancement of women in face of the last words he uttered on the subject at the close of his life:

"I agree that a woman should be enlightened in all things; but I do not wish her to have an offensive desire to make herself learned merely to seem learned. I would rather that sometimes she should pretend ignorance of the things she knows. I like her to hide her studies and have knowledge without wishing every one to know of it." [1]

"George Dandin" was first played before Louis XIV., on the occasion of a fête at Versailles, given July 18, 1668 to celebrate the taking of Franche-Comté and the treaty of Aix-la-Chapelle. Its success was marked; and although it is the only play in which Molière has put an unfaithful wife upon the stage, no one was scandalized, or even pretended to be so; probably because, as one of his commentators has said, he took care not to render Angélique interesting; her character is such that she leaves the scene with the contempt and dislike of the audience.

[1] Femmes Savantes, Act I., Scene 3.

TARTUFFE

Comedy

IN FIVE ACTS

PREFACE TO TARTUFFE

By MOLIÈRE

HERE is a comedy about which much noise has been made; which was persecuted for years, while the persons it ridicules proved that they were much stronger in France than those I had hitherto laughed at. The marquises, the learned women, the luckless husbands, and the doctors had meekly borne their representation; in fact, they made believe to be amused, with the rest of the world, by the portraits made of them. But the hypocrites cannot bear ridicule. They were alarmed at once; and thought it monstrous that I should dare to make fun of their cant and attempt to decry a trade which so many honest folk are concerned in. That was a crime they could not pardon; and they all armed themselves against my comedy with dreadful fury. They took good care, however, not to attack it on the side where it wounded them; they are too politic for that; they know the ways of life

too well to lay bare their real minds. Following their laudable custom, they hide their own interests behind the cause of God; "Tartuffe" they say, is an offence against religion. It is full of abominations from end to end; they see nothing in it but what deserves to be burned. Every syllable is impious; even the gestures are criminal; the merest glance, the slightest shaking of the head, the least step right or left, hide mysteries which they manage to explain to my injury.

In vain have I submitted my play to the judgment of friends, and to the criticism of all the world; the corrections I have made, the opinion of the king and queen, who have seen the comedy, the approbation of great princes and ministers of State who have publicly honored it with their presence, the testimony of good men who find it profitable, — all that is of no avail. My enemies will not desist; and to this day they prompt their zealous bigots, who cry out publicly, offer me pious insults, and charitably damn me.

I should care very little for what they say were it not for their cleverness in making me appear the enemy of that which I respect, and in winning to their side good men, whose gen-

uine faith they work upon, and who, through the ardor which they truly feel for the cause of heaven, are open to the impressions my enemies seek to give them. It is this that obliges me to defend my cause. I desire to justify myself and my comedy in the minds of truly religious persons, whom I conjure, with all my heart, not to condemn these things before they see them, but, on the contrary, to lay aside all prejudice and not to serve the passions of those whose cant dishonors them.

If any one will take pains to examine my comedy candidly, he will see that my intentions are wholly innocent; that the play does not, in any sense, laugh at those things which we ought to revere; that I have treated my subject with the precautions which its delicacy required; and that I have used all the art and all the care I possibly could in distinguishing the character of the hypocrite from that of truly pious men. For this very purpose, I employed two whole acts in preparing the way for my scoundrel. The audience is not kept for one moment in doubt; he is known for what he is from the start; and, from end to end, he does not say one word, he does not do one act, which will not show to the spectators the nature

of a bad man, and bring into relief that of the good man to which I oppose him.

I know that these gentlemen insinuate, by way of answer, that the theatre is not the place to discuss these matters; but I ask, with all due deference to them, on what they base their theory. It is a proposition which they simply suppose; they have not tried to prove it in any way. It would not be difficult to prove to them, on the other hand, that comedy, among the ancients, had its origin in religion and made part of its Mysteries; that our neighbors the Spaniards never celebrate a church festival in which comedy does not take part; that even among ourselves, it owes its birth to the help of a religious fraternity who still own the Hôtel de Bourgogne, a place formerly set apart to represent the most important Mysteries of our faith; that we may still read comedies written in black-letter by a doctor of the Sorbonne; and finally, to go no farther, that in our own time the sacred plays of Monsieur de Corneille have been acted, to the admiration of all France.

If the purpose of comedy is to correct the vices of men, I do not see why some comedies should be privileged to do so, others not. To allow this would produce results far more dan-

gerous to the State than any other. We have evidence that the stage has great virtue as a public corrective. But the finest shafts of serious morality are often less effective than those of satire; nothing corrects the majority of men so well as a picture of their faults. The strongest means of attacking vice is by exposing it to the laughter of the world. We can endure reproof, but we cannot endure ridicule. We are willing to be wicked, but not to be absurd.

I am reproached for putting pious language into the mouth of my impostor. Hey! how could I help it, if I truly represented the character of a hypocrite? It is enough, I think, to have made quite clear the criminal motives which make him say these things. I have cut out all sacred terms which might be painful when used by him in a shocking way. "But," says some one, "he proclaims, in the fourth act, a pernicious moral." Is not that moral a thing which is perpetually before our eyes? Does it reveal, in my comedy, a fact we do not know? Why should we fear that evils so generally detested should agreeably impress the mind, or that I make them dangerous by putting them on the stage and in the mouth of a known villain? There is no ground for such fear; and

the comedy of "Tartuffe" must either be approved or other comedies must be condemned.

That, in fact, is the object of this attack, for never was there such inveighing against the stage. I cannot deny that there have been Fathers of the Church who condemned comedy; but no one can dispute that other reverend men have treated it more gently; therefore the weight of that censure is lessened by half; and all that can be deduced from this diversity of opinion among minds enlightened from the same source is that they have seen comedy from different points of view; some have considered it in its purity, while others looked only at its corruptions, and have confounded true comedy with villanous entertainments, justly called "spectacles of turpitude."

Now, inasmuch as we ought to discuss things, not words, and most of our contradictions come from not understanding each other and using the same words to cover opposite meanings, we have only to strip off the veil of ambiguity and look at what comedy really is, to see whether or not it is condemnable. We shall discover, I think, that being neither more nor less than a witty poem, reproving the faults of men by agreeable lessons, it cannot be cen-

sured without great injustice. If we are willing to listen to the testimony of antiquity it will tell us that the most celebrated philosophers praised comedy, even those who made profession of austere virtue and rebuked incessantly the vices of their age. It will show us that Aristotle devoted his evenings to the theatre, and took pains to reduce to precepts the art of writing comedy. It will also inform us that its greatest men, the first in dignity, made it their glory to write plays themselves; while others did not disdain to recite in public those they wrote; that Greece paid homage to the art by glorious prizes and the splendid theatres with which she honored it; and that in Rome the art was welcomed with extraordinary honors, — I do not mean in debauched and licentious Rome, under its emperors, but in the disciplined old Rome, under its consuls, in the days when Roman virtue was vigorous.

I admit that there have been times when comedy became corrupt. What is there that the world does not corrupt? There is nothing so innocent that men will not foist sin into it; no art so wholesome but what they will reverse the intentions of it; nothing so good in itself that they will not put it to some bad use.

Medicine is a useful art; we all respect it as one of the most excellent things we have; and yet there have been times when it became odious; often it has been used to poison men. Philosophy is a gift from Heaven, bestowed upon us to lift our minds to the knowledge of God by the contemplation of his marvels in Nature; yet no one is ignorant how it has been turned from its true mission, and publicly used to sustain impiety. The holiest things are not protected from man's corruption; daily we see scoundrels misusing piety, and making it subserve the greatest crimes. But, for all that, we do not fail to make the proper distinctions; we do not involve, with false inference, the true excellence of the thing misused with the evil of its corrupters. We separate the harmful practice from the intention of the art itself; and, as we do not suppress medicine because Rome banished it, or philosophy because it was publicly condemned at Athens, neither ought we to forbid comedy because it was censured at one period of its history. That censure had its reasons, which exist no longer. Censure is now confined to what it sees; we ought not to draw it beyond the limit it has assigned to itself; it should not

be suffered to go farther than it need and so involve the innocent with the guilty. The comedy that was formerly attacked is not the comedy we are now defending; and the public should be very careful not to confound the one with the other. They are two beings whose moral natures are entirely opposed. They have no connection with each other except in similarity of name. It would be a terrible injustice to condemn Olympia the virtuous woman because there was once another Olympia who was a wanton. Such judgments would create disorder in the world; nothing would be safe from condemnation; and, inasmuch as such rigor cannot be enforced, mercy should be shown to comedy, and approval given to plays in which integrity and instruction are seen to reign.

I know that there are minds whose delicacy cannot endure comedies of any kind; who say that the most virtuous are the most dangerous; that the passions therein depicted are all the more affecting because they are mingled with virtue, and that souls are moved to pity by such representations. I do not see that there is any crime in being moved by the sight of honest passion. The absolute insensibility to

which these persons seek to raise our souls is a lofty stage of virtue; but I doubt if human nature has the strength to attain to such perfection, and I submit that it may be better to rectify and calm men's passions than seek to crush them altogether.

I will admit that there are places it were better to frequent than the theatre. If blame must indeed be cast on all things that do not look directly toward God, the stage must be one of them; and I should not complain were it condemned with all the rest. But let us suppose — what is true — that the exercises of religion must have intervals, and that men have need of relaxation and amusement; then I maintain that none more innocent can be found than that of comedy.

But I am writing too much. I will end with the remark of a great prince on the comedy of "Tartuffe."

Eight days after it was forbidden, a play was acted before the court entitled "Hermit Scaramouche" and the king, as he went out, said to the great prince whom I have mentioned: "I should like to know why the persons who are so scandalized at Molière's comedy have never said a word against 'Scaramouche.'"

To which the prince replied: "The reason is that the comedy of 'Scaramouche' laughs at heaven and religion, about which those gentlemen care nothing at all; but Molière's comedy laughs at them; and that is a thing they can not endure."

FIRST PETITION

PRESENTED TO THE KING

On the Comedy of "Tartuffe," which had not yet been represented in public

SIRE, — The duty of comedy being to correct men while amusing them, I thought that, in the employ which I hold,[1] I could not do better than attack with ridiculous scenes the vices of my epoch; and as hypocrisy is one of the most common, troublesome, and dangerous of those vices, it came into my mind, Sire, that I should do no small service to all honest men in your kingdom if I wrote a comedy against hypocrites, and set forth, in a proper manner, the studied grimaces of those extravagantly pious folk, and the covert rascalities of those counterfeiters of devotion, who endeavor to

[1] That of leader of the "Troupe du Roi."

impose on others by canting zeal and sophistical charity.

I wrote the comedy, Sire, with, as I think, all the care and circumspection that the delicacy of the matter demanded; and the better to maintain the respect and esteem which we owe to all true piety, I made the character I had to deal with as plain as possible. I left nothing equivocal in my play. I took out all that might seem to confound good with evil, and used nothing in my picture but the special colors and essential features required to show at first sight an actual, unmistakable hypocrite.

Nevertheless all my precautions have been useless. Persons are relying, Sire, on the sensitiveness of your soul in matters of religion; and they have known how to take you on the only side on which you are takable, — I mean, that of your respect for sacred things. The Tartuffes have had the wit to find favor with your Majesty; in short, the originals have suppressed the copy, innocent as it is, and like as people thought it.

Though the suppression of my work has been a serious blow to me, my pain has been greatly softened by the manner in which your Majesty expressed yourself to me on the subject. I felt,

Sire, that, your Majesty having had the kindness to declare you saw nothing to object to in the comedy which I am forbidden to produce, I had no cause whatever to complain.

But, notwithstanding this glorious declaration of the greatest king on earth and the most enlightened, in spite too of the approbation of Monseigneur the Legate and many of our own bishops, who, in the private readings which I have given before them of my work, agreed in the sentiments of your Majesty, — in spite, I say, of all that, a book has just appeared, written by the rector of the ——, which openly contradicts that august testimony. It is useless for your Majesty and Monseigneur the Legate and all the prelates to give your opinion; my comedy (though no one has seen it) is diabolical, and diabolical are my brains. I am a demon clothed in flesh and dressed like a man, a libertine free-thinker, an impious being, deserving of exemplary torture. It is not enough that fire should expiate my offences, — that would be letting me off too cheaply; the charitable zeal of the pious writer does not stop there; he insists that I shall receive no mercy from God; he is determined that I shall be damned — *that* is a settled matter.

The book, Sire, has been presented to your Majesty, who will no doubt perceive how grievous it must be for me to be daily exposed to the insults of these gentlemen, and what evil they can do me in the world by such calumnies, if they are tolerated; and also, what interest I have in freeing myself from such mis-statements and proving to the public that my play is not in the least what they are trying to make it seem. I shall not say a word, Sire, of what I might ask in defence of my reputation, and to justify the innocence of my comedy in the eyes of the world; enlightened kings, like yourself, do not need to be shown what is desired; they see, like God, that which is needful for us, and know better than we what they ought to grant. It suffices me to put my cause in the hands of your Majesty, and I await, with respect, what it may please you to do in the matter.

SECOND PETITION

PRESENTED TO THE KING

In his camp before the town of Lille in Flanders; by the named La Thorillière and La Grange, comedians of his Majesty and companions of the Sieur Molière; on the injunction issued August 6, 1667, not to perform the comedy of "Tartuffe" without a further order from his Majesty

SIRE, — It is a very bold thing in me to come and importune a great monarch in the midst of his glorious victories; but in the position in which I am placed, Sire, where shall I find protection except just here, where I seek it? Whom can I entreat to help me against the authority of a power which is crushing me, but the source of all power and authority, the just dispenser of absolute orders, the sovereign judge and master of all things?

My comedy, Sire, can be played here only through the kindness of Your Majesty. In vain have I produced it under the name of "The Impostor," and disguised that personage by the apparel of a man of the world; in vain have I given him a little hat, a bushy wig, a huge collar, with a sword, and lace all over his coat; in vain have I softened various parts and

cut out carefully all that I thought capable of furnishing even a pretext to the celebrated originals, whose portraits I had endeavored to make; it was all to no purpose. The cabal is up in arms at the mere conjectures they have made about the thing. They have found means to mislead minds which, in other matters, profess that they are never misled. My comedy had no sooner appeared than it was blasted by an authority which we are forced to respect; and all that I was able to do in this crisis to save myself from the fury of the storm, was to say that your Majesty had been good enough to permit the performance, and that I therefore did not think myself obliged to ask permission of others, inasmuch as it was only your Majesty who had the power to withdraw that which I had.

I have no doubt, Sire, that the persons I depict in my comedy will use every effort against me with your Majesty, and will bring over to their side, as they have already done, many pious people, who are all the more easily misled because they judge others by themselves. My enemies have the art to give a fine coloring to their intentions; nevertheless, whatever they may pretend, it is not God's

interests that move them. They have shown this plainly enough in the comedies they have allowed to be played many times in public without saying a word. Those comedies attacked only true religion and piety, for which these persons care very little; but mine attacks and laughs at *them*, and that is what they cannot bear. They will not forgive me for exposing their impostures to the eyes of the world; and, no doubt, they will tell your Majesty that every one is scandalized by my comedy. But the real truth is, Sire, that all Paris is scandalized at the injunction put upon it. The most scrupulous persons thought the representation a useful one, and every one is surprised that persons of eminent position should pay such deference to a class of men who ought to be the horror of the whole world, so opposite are they to the truth and piety they profess.

I respectfully await the judgment which your Majesty will deign to render on this subject; but it is very certain, Sire, that I shall have to give up writing comedies if the Tartuffes are to win the day. They will assume the right, from that moment, to persecute me more than ever, and to find fault with the most innocent things that come from my pen.

Deign of your goodness, Sire, to protect me against their envenomed hatred; and may I, on your return from this glorious campaign, refresh your Majesty after the fatigues of conquest, give you innocent pleasure after noble toil, and make the monarch laugh who makes all Europe tremble.

THIRD PETITION

PRESENTED TO THE KING, FEBRUARY 5, 1669

SIRE, — A very worthy doctor, whose patient I have the honor to be,[1] has promised, and is willing to go before a notary and swear, to make me live thirty years longer if I will obtain a favor from your Majesty. I told him as to his promise, that I did not want so much as that, and would be quite satisfied if he would bind himself not to kill me. The favor, Sire, is a canonry in your chapel-royal at Vincennes, made vacant by the death of ——.

[1] His name was Mauvilain. The king said to Molière: "You have a doctor, what does he do for you?" "Sire," said Molière, "he comes to see me, we talk together, he prescribes remedies, I don't take them, and I get well." Molière obtained the canonry he asked for.

Dare I ask this favor of your Majesty on the very day of the grand resurrection of "Tartuffe," resuscitated by your goodness? By that first favor I am reconciled to all godly people; by the second, if granted, I shall be reconciled with the doctors. For me, no doubt, these are too many great favors all at once; but perhaps they are not too many for your Majesty to grant; and I await, with some hope, the answer to my petition.

PERSONAGES

MADAME PERNELLE .	*Mother of Orgon.*
ORGON	*Husband of Elmire.*
ELMIRE	*Wife of Orgon.*
DAMIS	*Son of Orgon.*
MARIANE	*Daughter of Orgon, beloved by Valère.*
VALÈRE	*Lover of Mariane.*
CLÉANTE	*Brother-in-law of Orgon.*
TARTUFFE	*Hypocrite.*
DORINE	*Companion to Mariane.*
M. LOYAL	*Sheriff's officer.*
AN OFFICER OF POLICE.	
FLIPOTE	*Maid to Madame Pernelle.*

The scene is in Paris, in Orgon's house.

TARTUFFE

Act First

SCENE FIRST

MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLÉANTE, DAMIS, DORINE, FLIPOTE

MADAME PERNELLE.

COME, Flipote, let us go; I must be rid of them.

ELMIRE.

You walk so fast it is difficult to keep up with you.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Leave me, leave me, daughter-in-law; come no farther. These are civilities I can do without.

ELMIRE.

I do the duty that I owe to you. But tell me, mother, why do you leave so hastily?

MADAME PERNELLE.

Because I cannot see these goings-on; besides, no one takes pains to please me in this household. Yes, I leave you much dissatisfied; all my lessons are set at nought; nothing is here respected; all of you talk at once and loudly; this house is actually a tower of Babel.

DORINE.

If —

MADAME PERNELLE.

My dear, you are nothing but a servant after all; rather too ready with your tongue, and very impertinent; you say your say on all things.

DAMIS.

But —

MADAME PERNELLE.

You are a fool in four letters, grandson; and it is I, your grandmother, who tell you so. I have warned my son, your father, a hundred times that you are beginning to get the look of a scapegrace, and will never give him anything but worry.

MARIANE.

I think —

MADAME PERNELLE.

As for you, his sister, you are very demure; butter will hardly melt in your mouth, so mincing are you. But still waters run deep, they say, and you lead, on the sly, a life I detest.

ELMIRE.

But, mother —

MADAME PERNELLE.

Your conduct, daughter-in-law, saving your presence, is thoroughly bad. You ought to set this family a good example. Their deceased mother did her duty better. You squander your substance; it shocks me to see you dressed like a princess. Whoso wants to please her husband does not need such finery.

CLÉANTE.

But, madame, after all —

MADAME PERNELLE.

As for you, her brother, I esteem you much, I honor, I respect you; but if *I* were her husband in place of my son, I would request you not to set foot in my house. You are perpetually preaching maxims of life which honest folk ought not to follow. I speak somewhat frankly,

but that's my way; I don't mince matters when I have them at heart.

Damis.

Your Monsieur Tartuffe is fortunate —

Madame Pernelle.

There, indeed, is a man of worth to whom you ought to listen. I cannot bear, without becoming angry, the way a fool like you finds fault with him.

Damis.

What! am I to bear it, I, when a bigoted hypocrite comes here and tries to usurp in our home a tyrannical power? Are we forbidden to amuse ourselves unless this fine gentleman deigns to consent?

Dorine.

If we listened to him and believed in his maxims we could n't do anything that is n't a crime; for he censures all things, the carping zealot!

Madame Pernelle.

All that he censures deserves censure. He tries to lead you on the road to heaven, and my son ought to make you love him.

DAMIS.

No, grandmother, no; neither my father nor all the world can force me to feel kindly to him. I should betray my soul if I said otherwise. I resent his ways of doing things, I am angry all the time; and I foresee the consequences. I know that I shall come to some great outburst with that lying scoundrel.

DORINE.

Yes, 't is indeed a scandal to see that stranger in this house lay down the law. A beggar! who, when he came, had neither shoes nor coat worth a brass farthing; that *he* should so forget his real condition as to thwart every one and play the master!

MADAME PERNELLE.

Mercy upon me! the world would go much better if it were governed by his pious doctrines.

DORINE.

He passes for a saint in your delusion; but his stock in trade, believe me, is hypocrisy.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Just hear her tongue!

DORINE.

I would trust neither him nor his valet Laurent without a surety.

MADAME PERNELLE.

I know nothing about the man, but I myself will guarantee the master. You only hate him and reject him because he tells you, each and all, the truth. 'T is sin his heart abhors; the cause of heaven is that which drives him on to all he does.

DORINE.

Then why, especially of late, can he not bear that others should frequent this house? Is heaven so injured by a friendly visit that he must raise an uproar fit to deafen us? If I may speak my mind among ourselves, I think, upon my word (*motioning to Elmire*), that he is jealous of madame.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Hush! reflect on what you say. It is not he alone who blames these visits. Your way of life; the bustle that attends the persons who frequent you; these coaches without end before the door; the noisy crowd of lacqueys, disturb the neighborhood. I try to think that no harm

comes of it; but all the town is talking of these things; and that is, in itself, an evil.

CLÉANTE.

Hey! madame, do you think to hinder gossip? It would indeed be grievous were we forced to sacrifice our loyal friends because of silly talk about us. But if we did resolve upon the sacrifice, do you think 't would force the world to hold its tongue? There is no barrier to slander. Therefore we ought to pay no heed to foolish cackle. Let us endeavor to live innocently, and give full license to the talkers.

DORINE.

Daphné, our neighbor, and her little husband, are not they the ones who talk against us? Those whose behavior most excites derision are sure to be the ones to slander others. They never fail to catch at once the faintest glimmer of a slight attachment, and spread the rumor with delight, giving it the turn they wish to be believed. The acts of others, tinted with their colors, will justify, they think, their own misdeeds, and (with the false idea of some resemblance) give to their intrigues innocence, or cast elsewhere some portion of the public blame with which they are overweighted.

MADAME PERNELLE.

Such arguments do not affect this matter. We know that Orante leads an exemplary life,— her efforts all are heavenward; and I know from others that she condemns the way of living of this household.

DORINE.

An excellent example! the lady is so good! 'T is true she lives austerely; but years have put this ardent zeal into her soul; she is known to be a prude reluctantly. So long as she was able to attract men's homage she made good use of her advantages. But as the sparkle of her bright eyes dimmed, she renounced the world, which then was leaving her, and with the pompous veil of lofty virtue disguised the failure of her stale attractions. 'T is thus that Time converts these past coquettes. They find it hard to see their lovers leave them; when thus abandoned, their regretful souls find no resource except the trade of prudery. Thus the stern virtue of these pious women must censure all and pardon nothing. They loudly blame the lives of others, not out of charity, but envy,— unable to endure that others should have enjoyments from which the coming on of age has weaned their own desires.

MADAME PERNELLE, *to Elmire.*

So these are the rigmaroles that please you, daughter-in-law! I am condemned to silence in your house, for madame here assumes the right to chatter all day long. Still, I intend to say some words myself; and I now tell you that my son, your husband, never did a wiser thing than welcome to his home this saintly personage. I tell you, also, that Heaven had need to send him here to reform the erring souls of all this family; and that you ought, for your soul's sake, to listen to him, for he reproves that only which is reprehensible. These visits, balls, and conversation-parties are all inventions of the Evil One. No pious words are ever heard there; nothing but idle talk, and songs, and frivolous nonsense. Often our fellow-creatures get the worst of it, for all talk scandal to the right and left. People of sense are quite bewildered by the confusion of these assemblies, where a thousand idle tales are made of less than nothing. 'T is truly the tower of Babel, for everybody babbles, without stint or measure; and to relate the last— (*Pointing to Cléante*) There 's monsieur, sneering already! Go, seek the fools who ought to make you sneer. (*To Elmire*) Adieu, my daughter-in-law; I shall say nothing more.

I cut this household off from half my property, and it will be a fine day truly when I again set foot within these walls. (*Boxes Flipote's ear.*) Come, you, who are gaping at the ceiling. Heavens and earth! I'll warm your ears. Walk on, you slut, walk on.

SCENE SECOND

Cléante, Dorine

Cléante.

I shall not follow them, lest she quarrel with me again; that good woman —

Dorine.

What a pity she's no longer present to hear you call her that! She would cry out that you may be good, but that she is not of an age to be given that title.

Cléante.

How angry she was with us, all about nothing! And how infatuated she is with her Tartuffe!

Dorine.

Yes; but truly, that is nothing to the state of her son; if you had seen him lately, you

would say it was much worse. The troubles of the country had made him a wise man; he served his king with courage; and yet, ever since he has been so bewitched by Tartuffe he is like a man besotted. He calls him brother; loves him in his heart more than he loves mother or son, or wife or daughter. He makes him confidant of all his secrets, and of his actions the supreme director; he pets and cossets him, and could not show to any mistress a greater tenderness. At table, where he seats him at the upper end, he delights to see him eat enough for six; all the tid-bits must go to him; and if he chance to sneeze, he cries "God bless you." In short, he is crazy about him; the man 's his all, his hero; he admires him at every turn, quotes him perpetually; his slightest actions he thinks miracles, and all the words he utters are portentous. Tartuffe, who knows his dupe and means to profit by him, has the art, by scores of colorable shams, to dazzle him. His canting piety extracts large sums of money from his purse; he assumes the right to criticise us all; even the foppish fellow who attends him presumes to imitate his master and read us lessons. With scowling eyes he preaches to us and flings away our ribbons, rouge, and patches. The

other day the wretch tore up a kerchief that he found in "The Flower of Saints," — declaring we were guilty of a crime in mingling the devil's finery with holiness.

SCENE THIRD

ELMIRE, MARIANE, DAMIS, CLÉANTE, DORINE

ELMIRE, *to Cléante.*

It is fortunate you did not come with us and hear her parting speech. But I have seen my husband coming home; as he did not see me, I will go upstairs, and wait his coming there.

CLÉANTE.

I shall await him here, merely to say good-day.

SCENE FOURTH

CLÉANTE, DAMIS, DORINE

DAMIS.

Say something to him about my sister's marriage. I half suspect that Tartuffe hinders it, and drives my father to these late evasions. You know the interest that I have in the

matter. If mutual ardor stirs my sister and Valère, the sister of the latter, as you know, is dear to me; and if 't is necessary —

DORINE.

Hush! here he comes.

SCENE FIFTH

ORGON, CLÉANTE, DORINE

ORGON.

Ah! brother-in-law, good-day.

CLÉANTE.

I was just leaving. I am glad to see you back. The country can't be very blooming at this season.

ORGON.

Dorine. (*To Cléante*) Wait, my dear brother-in-law, I beg. You will allow me, I am sure, to ease my mind by asking what has happened in my absence. (*To Dorine*) Has all gone well these two days? What have they done at home? How is their health?

DORINE.

Madame had fever all the day you left, with a strange headache.

ORGON.

And Tartuffe?

DORINE.

Tartuffe! oh, he is well; stout and fat, with his florid skin and rosy lips.

ORGON.

Poor man!

DORINE.

At night she felt a great disgust for food and could not touch her supper; her headache still was cruelly distressing.

ORGON.

And Tartuffe?

DORINE.

He ate his supper with good appetite before her, and piously consumed two partridges and half a leg of mutton, hashed.

ORGON.

Poor man!

DORINE.

The whole night long she never closed her eyes; the heat prevented her from sleeping; and so till daylight we sat up with her.

ORGON.

And Tartuffe?

DORINE.

Urged by a pleasant desire to sleep he left the table, went to his room, and put himself at once into his warm and comfortable bed, where, without the slightest trouble, he slept till morning.

ORGON.

Poor man!

DORINE.

At last she yielded to our persuasions and resolved on being bled. Relief ensued immediately.

ORGON.

And Tartuffe?

DORINE.

He gathered proper courage and fortified his soul against the ills of life; to repair the loss of blood caused to madame, he drank four flasks of wine.

ORGON.

Poor man!

DORINE.

They are both quite well at present. I will now go and tell madame of your return, and of the interest that you take in her recovery.

SCENE SIXTH

ORGON, CLÉANTE

CLÉANTE.

She is laughing at you, brother, to your face; and, without intending to annoy you, I must frankly say that there is justice in it. Who ever heard of a like caprice? Can it be that a man should hold a spell in these days to make you oblivious of all else but him? Having rescued him from poverty, have you reached the point of —

ORGON.

Halt there, my brother-in-law; you do not know the man of whom you speak.

CLÉANTE.

I do not know him, as you say; but in order that I may know what manner of man he is —

ORGON.

Brother, you would be charmed to know him; your rapture would be endless. He is a man — who — ah! a man — a man, in short, who lives up to what he teaches, enjoys an inward peace, and counts the world a muck-heap. Yes, I have grown another being through intercourse

with him; he teaches me to feel no love for anything; he weans my soul from all affections; and I could see my mother, brother, wife, and children die and not care *that* for it.

CLÉANTE.

Can these be human feelings, brother!

ORGON.

If you had seen him as I first saw him, you would have felt the friendship that I feel. He came to church each morning, and with a humble air knelt down beside me upon both his knees. He drew the eyes of all the congregation to him by the fervor with which he prayed to heaven; he sighed, he seemed in ecstasy, and humbly kissed the earth from time to time. Then, when I rose to go, he hastened forward to the door to offer me the holy water. Learning from his valet, who copies him in all things, who he was and his great poverty, I made him gifts. But he, with modesty, desired to give me back a part. "It is too much," he said, "too much by half; I scarce deserve your pity." And when I still refused to take the money back, he went, before my eyes, and gave it to the poor. At last Heaven led me to invite him to my home; and since that day all things

have prospered here. He has corrected much; even in my wife he takes the deepest interest for my honor's sake. He warns me of the gallants who make soft eyes at her; for me he is more jealous than I am for myself. In fact, you could scarce believe to what a point his pious zeal can carry him. His conscience thinks the merest trifle sin; the veriest nothing is enough to shock him; he even went so far the other day as to accuse himself for having caught a flea while he was praying, and then of killing it with too much anger.

CLÉANTE.

Parbleu! you are crazy, brother; or else, I do believe, you are laughing at me. If so, what do you mean? Is all this jesting meant to —

ORGON.

Brother, such speeches argue too much liberty of thought. Your soul is somewhat tainted with that freedom, and, as I have already preached to you a dozen times, you will draw down upon yourself some great disaster.

CLÉANTE.

That is the usual talk of your new set of people. They want all other men to be as

blind as they. To have good eyes, they call free-thinking; and he who cannot worship canting affectation has no respect or faith for sacred things. No, no, your speeches cannot frighten me; I know of what I speak; Heaven sees my heart; it is not every one who is a slave to your conventions. There are false godly men, just as there are false brave ones; and as we see them only where their honor calls, the truly brave are those who make least flourish; just as the truly pious, whose steps we ought to follow, are never those who most parade their piety. What! you make no distinction between hypocrisy and true religion? You treat them both on equal terms, and render the same honor to the mask as to the countenance? You rate sincerity with artfulness, confound appearances with truth, value the shadow as you do the person, and take false money at the worth of gold? Men, for the most part, are strange beings; we never find them naturally just. Reason, for them, is too restricted; they go beyond its limits everywhere, and often spoil a noble thing by pushing it too far and making it preposterous. I speak of this in passing, brother-in-law.

ORGON.

Yes, you are, no doubt, a most revered philosopher; all knowledge has retreated into you. You are the only wise, the only enlightened human being, — an oracle, a Cato of the age in which we live; all other men beside you are but fools.

CLÉANTE.

No, no! I am no such reverenced philosopher; wisdom has not retreated to my breast; but I do know — and this is all my knowledge — truth from falsehood. And as I see no sort of hero more to be prized than a truly pious man, no other thing in life so noble and so beautiful as the holy fervor of a real devotion, so I find nought more odious than these whited sepulchres of canting zeal, these bold performers of religion, these pious humbugs waiting in the churches for their dupes; whose sacrilegious and deceitful cant plays as it will, unchecked, with all that mortals hold most sacred and most holy. These men, who, with their souls absorbed in selfish interests, make godliness a craft, a merchandise, and seek to purchase dignities and credit by blinking eyes and simulated ecstasy, who are seen rushing with no common ardor along the path to heaven in quest

of fortune, who, fervid and prayerful, preach retirement amid a court, — know how to fit their piety to their vices, are sharp, vindictive, full of artifice, wholly without faith in anything; and, when they wish to injure others, they call their bold resentment zeal for Heaven. Such men as these are the more dangerous in their peevish anger because they use the weapons we revere, and seek to kill us with a sacred sword. Their wily natures are, alas, too common. But truly pious hearts are easily distinguished. The present century, brother, presents some fine examples to our eyes. See Ariston, see Périandre, Oronte, Alcidamas, Polydore, Clitandre; no one denies to them the epithet of godly; and yet they are not at all the trumpeters of virtue; we never find in them that intolerable parade of piety. Their religion is human, gentle, merciful. They do not censure all our actions; there 's too much arrogance, they think, in such reproof; they leave vainglorious words to others; 't is by their actions they reprove our lives. The impulse of their souls is to judge well of others; they are not on the watch for evil. There 's no caballing in their minds, and they have no intrigues to carry on. Their chief care is to live good lives. They are not bitter against

sinners; 't is to the sin their hatred fastens; nor do they seek to show in Heaven's cause a greater zeal than Heaven itself desires. Those are the men I like; that is the way to deal with others; there, in short, is the example which we all should follow. Your man, to tell the truth, is not of that kind. I know you vaunt his piety in all good faith, but I think that you are dazzled by false sanctimony.

ORGON.

My dear, good brother-in-law, have you said all your say?

CLÉANTE.

Yes.

ORGON, *turning to go.*

Then I 'm your very humble servant.

CLÉANTE.

Stop; one moment, brother, one word. Let us drop this topic. I wish to speak of Valère; you know he has your promise to let him be your son-in-law.

ORGON.

Yes.

CLÉANTE.

You opened the way yourself to that soft tie.

ORGON.

True.

CLÉANTE.

Then why put off the marriage?

ORGON.

I do not know.

CLÉANTE.

Have you another plan in mind?

ORGON.

Perhaps.

CLÉANTE.

There is no obstacle, I think, to hinder you from keeping to your word?

ORGON.

That 's as it may be.

CLÉANTE.

Does it need such caution just to say one word? Valère has asked me to speak to you.

ORGON.

Thank heaven!

CLÉANTE.

What am I to tell him?

ORGON.

Anything you please.

CLÉANTE.

But I must know your plans. What are they?

ORGON.

To do as Heaven wills.

CLÉANTE.

Let us speak plainly. Valère has your promise; do you, or do you not, intend to keep it?

ORGON.

Adieu.

CLÉANTE, *alone.*

I fear misfortune to his love, and I must let him know how things are going.

END OF FIRST ACT.

Act Second

SCENE FIRST

ORGON, MARIANE

ORGON.

MARIANE!

MARIANE.

Father.

ORGON.

Come here; I have something to say to you in private.

MARIANE, *to Orgon, who is looking into a closet.*

Why are you looking there?

ORGON.

To see if there is no one to overhear us. This is just the place for an eavesdropper. No, we are safe. Mariane, I have found you at all times tolerably docile, and at all times, too, you have been dear to me.

MARIANE.

I am very grateful for your fatherly love.

ORGON.

Well said, my daughter; but to deserve my love you must take pains to please me.

MARIANE.

I take the utmost pride in doing so.

ORGON.

Very good. What think you of our guest, Tartuffe?

MARIANE.

Who, I?

ORGON.

You. Be careful how you answer.

MARIANE.

Oh, then I 'll say exactly what you wish.

SCENE SECOND

ORGON, MARIANE, DORINE, *entering softly and standing behind Orgon without being seen*

ORGON.

You speak very properly. Therefore, my daughter, you will say that the highest merit

shines in his person; that he has touched your heart; and that you are glad to have him, by my choice, become your husband. Hey?

MARIANE, *recoiling in amazement.*

Ah!

ORGON.

What 's all this?

MARIANE.

What did you say?

ORGON.

How?

MARIANE.

Can I be mistaken?

ORGON.

What do you mean?

MARIANE.

Who is it, father, that I am to say has touched my heart? Whom shall I be glad to call my husband by your choice?

ORGON.

Tartuffe.

MARIANE.

He is nothing of all that to me, I swear to you, father. Why do you wish me to utter such a falsehood?

ORGON.

I wish it to be truth; it is enough for you that I have willed it.

MARIANE.

What? do you wish —

ORGON.

Yes; I intend by this marriage to join Tartuffe to my family. He will be your husband, my daughter; on that I am determined; and as for your wishes, I— (*Perceiving Dorine*) What are you doing here? Your curiosity is keen, my girl, to make you come and listen to me thus.

DORINE.

I don't know, truly, whether the rumor came from mere conjecture or from some odd chance; but I was told already of this marriage, and I have treated it as pure absurdity.

ORGON.

What! is the thing incredible?

DORINE.

So incredible that I do not believe it, even though you say it.

ORGON.

I know the way to force you to believe me.

DORINE.

Oh! you are telling us a tale in jest!

ORGON.

I am telling you that which you will shortly find is true.

DORINE.

Nonsense!

ORGON.

What I am saying, daughter, is no joke.

DORINE.

Do not believe him; he is joking.

ORGON.

I tell you —

DORINE.

No matter what you say, we never shall believe you.

ORGON.

My anger will at last —

DORINE.

Let us talk without anger, monsieur, I entreat you. Are you playing some joke on those who laid this plot? Your daughter is not the object of that canting bigot, for he has other matters on which his thoughts are bent. Besides, what good would such a marriage do you? Why

should you, with all your wealth, select a beggar for a son-in-law?

ORGON.

Be silent. If he has nothing, remember 't is for that we should revere him. His poverty is honest poverty; it lifts him high above all grandeur, because he lost his means by taking little care of earthly things, and clinging closely to the things eternal. My help will now enable him to issue from embarrassment, and so regain his property, also his domains, which are fiefs with good titles in his native province, where, such as we see him now, he is a nobleman.

DORINE.

Yes, but 't is he who says so, and such vanity does not accord with piety. He who claims the simplicity of a saintly life, ought not to make parade of name and birth. The humble ways of true devotion can ill endure the glitter of ambition; what goodness can there be in such à pride? But these remarks displease you; let us talk of the man, and leave his nobility alone. Can you, without a sense of wrong, give a daughter such as yours to such a man? Ought you not to think of certain decencies, and foresee the results of such a union? Remember

that a father risks a daughter's virtue by forcing her to marry against her liking. Her intention of living as an honest woman depends upon the qualities of the husband who is given her; and men to whom the finger of the world doth point make their wives often what we see they are. 'T is difficult indeed to be a faithful wife to certain husbands, of a certain kind; and he who gives his daughter to a man she hates must answer to Heaven for the wrong she does. Reflect upon these perils to which your scheme commits you.

ORGON.

So! I am to learn of you the way to live!

DORINE.

You could not well do better than follow my advice.

ORGON.

My daughter, we will pay no heed to all this nonsense. I know what is good for you; and I am your father. I gave my word, on your behalf, to Valère; but, beside the fact that I am told he gambles, I suspect him of being a free-thinker, and I do not observe that he frequents the churches.

DORINE.

Do you wish him to run there at your special hours, — like others who did it to be seen by you?

ORGON.

I did not ask for your opinion. The other, my daughter, stands well with Heaven, and that 's a treasure second to none. This marriage will crown your wishes with all good; it will be filled with sweetness and with pleasures. Together you will live in faithful ardor, like two dear children, or two turtledoves; no peevish quarrel can ever come between you, and you can make of Tartuffe what you will.

DORINE.

She? She 'll make a fool of him; I tell you that.

ORGON.

Heyday! what talk is this?

DORINE.

I say he has the making for it; and his example, monsieur, will in time carry the day against the virtue that your daughter has.

ORGON.

Cease interrupting me; learn to hold your tongue, and not to put your nose in things that don't concern you.

DORINE. *She interrupts him each time he turns to address his daughter.*

I am only speaking, monsieur, in your interests.

ORGON.

You trouble yourself too much about them; be silent, if you please.

DORINE.

If I did not love you —

ORGON.

I do not wish to be loved.

DORINE.

But I wish to love you, in spite of yourself.

ORGON.

Ha!

DORINE.

Your honor is dear to me, and I cannot bear to see you expose yourself to gibes.

ORGON.

Will you be silent?

DORINE.

It is a case of conscience not to let you go on with such a marriage.

ORGON.

Silence, serpent, whose brazen wit —

DORINE.

What! you are pious, and you lose your temper?

ORGON.

Yes; my bile is stirred by all this fiddle-faddle; and I insist that you shall hold your tongue.

DORINE.

So be it; but the less I say, the more I think.

ORGON.

Think, if you choose; but take good care to say no more to me, or — Enough! (*Turning to Mariane*) As a wise father, I have maturely pondered all these things.

DORINE, *aside.*

I am furious not to be allowed to speak.

ORGON.

Without being quite a lady's man, Tartuffe in person is so pleasing —

DORINE.

Oh, yes, a pretty looking fellow, he!

ORGON.

— that even if you have no sympathy for all his other gifts —

DORINE.

A fine choice truly! (*Orgon turns toward Dorine and, with his arms crossed, listens to her and looks straight in her face.*) Were I in her place, no man should marry me by force and not regret it. The moment that the ceremony was over I'd let him know that women have a vengeance always ready at their command.

ORGON, *to Dorine.*

So, what I say is not obeyed!

DORINE.

Why do you complain? I am not talking to you.

ORGON.

What are you doing, then?

DORINE.

I am talking to myself.

ORGON, *aside.*

I must chastise such insolence, and let her feel my hand at her next saucy word. (*He puts himself in position to box Dorine's ears; and at each sentence he addresses to his daughter he turns about to look at Dorine, who stands bolt upright without speaking.*) My daughter, you are bound to approve my plan — and believe that the husband — whom I have selected — (*To Dorine*) What do you say?

DORINE.

I have nothing to say.

ORGON.

Another word.

DORINE.

I don't choose to say it.

ORGON.

Well, I am watching for it.

DORINE.

I 'm not so silly, faith!

ORGON.

In short, my daughter, you must obey me, and show your deference to my choice.

DORINE, *running away.*

If I took such a husband I 'd make him pay for it.

ORGON, *after failing to box Dorine's ears.*

My daughter, you have a torment in that woman, with whom I can no longer live without perpetually sinning. I am unable to pursue her now, because her insolent words have fired my temper. I must go out and take the air and so recover my self-possession.

SCENE THIRD

MARIANE, DORINE

DORINE.

Have you lost your tongue? Am I to play your part in this affair? Why do you allow them to propose this crazy project without repelling it by a single word?

MARIANE.

What would you have me do against an arbitrary father?

DORINE.

Defend yourself against his threat.

MARIANE.

But how?

DORINE.

Tell him the heart can never love at others' bidding; that you marry for your own sake, not for his; that you are the one concerned in this affair, and therefore that the husband must please you, not him; and if his Tartuffe is so charming he 'd better marry him himself, for nothing hinders.

MARIANE.

My father has such empire over me that I should never have the force to tell him that.

DORINE.

Let us reason the matter out. Valère has made proposals to you; do you love him, or do you not?

MARIANE.

Ah! how unjust you are to my great love, Dorine. Ought you to ask me such a question? Have I not opened my heart to you a hundred times? You know my ardor for him, to its full extent.

DORINE.

How do I know your heart speaks by your lips; and whether this lover of yours has really touched it?

MARIANE.

You do me a great wrong in doubting it. I have shown, only too openly, my feelings.

DORINE.

Then you really love him?

MARIANE.

Yes, with the utmost ardor.

DORINE.

And, according to appearances, he loves you as ardently?

MARIANE.

I think so.

DORINE.

And you are, both of you, equally desirous to be married to each other?

MARIANE.

Assuredly.

DORINE.

Then what will you do about this other marriage?

MARIANE.

I shall kill myself if it is forced upon me.

DORINE.

Ah, true! that 's a resource of which I did not think; you have only to die to escape the whole

embarrassment. The remedy is marvellous — Ah! I am furious when I hear such talk as that.

MARIANE.

Good heavens! Dorine, what tempers you give way to! You have no compassion for people's troubles.

DORINE.

I have no compassion for people who say such foolish things, and then, like you, yield weakly on the first occasion.

MARIANE.

But how can I help it if I am so timid?

DORINE.

Love in a heart should strengthen it.

MARIANE.

Must I be strong for Valère? Is it not his place to obtain me of my father?

DORINE.

If your father is a downright tyrant, wholly infatuated with his Tartuffe, and breaks the promise he has given about your marriage, how can you lay the blame on Valère?

MARIANE.

But if I publicly refuse and scorn the other, shall I not show a heart too much in love? Am I, for Valère's sake,— no matter how distinguished he may be, — to cast aside the modesty of my sex and filial duty? Do you want me to spread my love before the world and —

DORINE.

No, I want nothing. I see you wish to belong to Monsieur Tartuffe; and I, now that I think of it, should be foolish indeed to turn you from such a marriage. What reason can I give to oppose your wishes? The match, in itself, is very advantageous. Monsieur Tartuffe! oh, oh! he's not to be sneezed at. Monsieur Tartuffe, indeed! to take the thing rightly, he's not a fool, not he, to blow his nose with his toes! It is no slight honor to be his better half, for the world is already crowning his name! He is noble by birth, and well-made in person; his ears are pink and his skin rosy! Oh, yes, you'll live content with such a husband!

MARIANE.

Good heavens!

DORINE.

What gay delight will fill your soul when you find yourself the wife of such a noble spouse!

MARIANE.

Oh! stop this dreadful talk, Dorine. Find me a way to escape this marriage. I have done with fears; I give up wholly; I am ready to do anything.

DORINE.

No; a daughter should obey her father, even though he gives her an ape for a husband. Your fate is a fine one; why do you complain of it? You will go by coach to his little town, so fertile in uncles and cousins, whom you will find much pleasure in entertaining. Then you will be taken into the gay world of those parts. You will visit, for your first appearance, Madame the bailiff's wife and Madame *l'élue*, who will grant you the honor of a folding-stool. During the carnival you may hope for a ball, and a grand band of music, to wit, two bagpipes; perhaps even Fagotin, the trained monkey, and the marionnettes if your husband —

MARIANE.

Oh! you are killing me! Do turn your mind on helping me out.

DORINE.

No, I thank you.

MARIANE.

Ah! Dorine, for pity's sake —

DORINE.

No; for your sins this marriage must go on.

MARIANE.

My dear girl —

DORINE.

No.

MARIANE.

If my promises and vows —

DORINE.

No. Tartuffe is your man; you can fondle him.

MARIANE.

You know how I have always trusted you.

DORINE.

No; you are doomed to be Tartufied.

MARIANE.

Well, then, since my fate does not move you to pity, leave me to my despair; it is from that my heart will gather strength; I know the infallible remedy for its woes. (*Turns to go out.*)

DORINE.

Hey! there, there! come back, and I 'll give up my wrath; I see I must, in spite of all, have pity on you.

MARIANE.

But if I am forced into this cruel martyrdom, I tell you, Dorine, I shall die.

DORINE.

Well, don't fret yourself. We 'll find some artful way of escape. Here comes your lover, Valère himself.

SCENE FOURTH

VALÈRE, MARIANE, DORINE

VALÈRE.

I have just heard a piece of news, madame, I did not know before; it is amazing.

MARIANE.

What news?

VALÈRE.

That you intend to marry Tartuffe.

MARIANE.

It is true that my father has taken that notion into his head.

VALÈRE.

Your father, madame, is pledged to —

MARIANE.

He has changed his mind, and has just proposed the other thing to me.

VALÈRE.

What ! seriously ?

MARIANE.

Yes, seriously. He openly insists upon the marriage.

VALÈRE.

And you ? what course will your heart take, madame ?

MARIANE.

I do not know.

VALÈRE.

The answer is honest. You do not know ?

MARIANE.

No.

VALÈRE.

No ?

MARIANE.

What do you advise ?

VALÈRE.

I ? I advise you to take that husband.

MARIANE.

Is that what you advise?

VALÈRE.

Yes.

MARIANE.

Honestly?

VALÈRE.

Of course. The choice is glorious; and deserves to be accepted.

MARIANE.

Very good. That is a counsel, monsieur, which I take.

VALÈRE.

You will not find much difficulty in taking it, I think.

MARIANE.

Not more than you have found in giving it.

VALÈRE.

I give it in the hope of pleasing you, madame.

MARIANE.

And I shall follow it to give you pleasure.

DORINE, *retiring to back of room.*

I 'll wait and see what comes of this.

VALÈRE.

This is how women love! So it was all deception when you —

MARIANE.

Don't speak of that, I beg of you. You have told me frankly that I had best accept the husband who is offered to me; and I declare that I shall do so, because you have given me that salutary counsel.

VALÈRE.

Do not excuse yourself by what I do. You had already formed your resolution, and you have seized a frivolous pretext to justify your broken promises.

MARIANE.

Ah! that is well said.

VALÈRE.

No doubt it is. Your heart has never felt true love for mine.

MARIANE.

Alas! you may think so.

VALÈRE.

Yes, yes, I well may think so. But my offended soul will be beforehand with your

actions; I know already where to offer both my vows and hand.

MARIANE.

I do not doubt it; and the love you merit —

VALÈRE.

Pray leave my merit to itself. I have little enough, no doubt, since you are faithless to it — But I rely upon the kindness another will have for me; I know whose soul, open to my retreat, will give consent, without false shame, to repair my loss.

MARIANE.

Your loss is not so great, and you will easily console yourself.

VALÈRE.

I shall do my best; pray be assured of that. A heart that can forget us piques our honor; we must forget it in return; and if we cannot, why then we must at least pretend to do so. It is a baseness, never to be pardoned, to still show love for one who has forsaken us.

MARIANE.

That is, no doubt, a very lofty and noble sentiment.

VALÈRE.

It is; and every one must needs approve it. What! would you have me keep within my soul the fervor of my love; and see you, with my very eyes, pass into other arms without withdrawing the heart you have rejected?

MARIANE.

On the contrary; what you propose to do is what I wish; in fact, I wish the thing were done already.

VALÈRE.

You wish it?

MARIANE.

Yes.

VALÈRE.

Madame, you have insulted me enough, and I go, this moment, to content your wishes. (*Makes a movement to go out.*)

MARIANE.

Very well.

VALÈRE, *turning.*

At least remember that it is you, yourself, who have constrained my heart to this great effort.

MARIANE.

Yes.

VALÈRE, *returning.*

And the plan my mind has now conceived is simply following your example.

MARIANE.

My example, so be it.

VALÈRE, *going out.*

Enough; you shall at once be gratified.

MARIANE.

So much the better.

VALÈRE, *returning again.*

You see me now for the last time in my life.

MARIANE.

Ah! very good.

VALÈRE. *Leaving the room, he turns at the door.*

Hey?

MARIANE.

What?

VALÈRE.

Did you not call me?

MARIANE.

I? you are dreaming.

VALÈRE.

Well, then? I go my way. Adieu, madame.
(*Walks slowly to the door.*)

MARIANE.

Adieu, monsieur.

DORINE, *to Mariane.*

As for me, I think you have lost your senses with all this folly. I left you both to quarrel it out, to see if something might not come of it. Holà, seigneur Valère! (*Catches Valère by the arm.*)

VALÈRE, *feigning to resist.*

What do you want of me, Dorine?

DORINE.

Come here.

VALÈRE.

No, my vexation is too great; do not hinder me from doing the thing she wishes.

DORINE.

Stop.

VALÈRE.

No; I tell you the thing is settled.

DORINE.

Ha!

MARIANE, *aside.*

He suffers in seeing me; my presence drives him hence. 'T were best that I should go and leave him here (*going away*).

DORINE, *leaving Valère and running after Mariane.*

The other now! Where are you going?

MARIANE.

Let me alone!

DORINE.

Come back!

MARIANE.

No, no, Dorine, it is in vain to keep me.

VALÈRE, *aside.*

The very sight of me is torture to her. 'T were better, no doubt, that I should go and leave her free (*going away*).

DORINE, *leaving Mariane and running after Valère.*

Again! The devil is in it all! Yes, I will keep you. Cease this foolery, and come here both of you. (*Takes Valère and Mariane by the hand and brings them back.*)

VALÈRE, *to Dorine.*

But what is your object?

MARIANE, *to Dorine.*

What do you wish to do?

DORINE.

To reconcile you both and mend your troubles. (*To Valère*) Are you not crazy to get in such a tantrum?

VALÈRE.

But you heard how she spoke to me?

DORINE, *to Mariane.*

And you are crazy to be so angry.

MARIANE.

But you saw yourself how he treated me?

DORINE, *to Valère.*

Silly nonsense on both sides. She has no other wish than to be yours; and I 'll bear witness to it. (*To Mariane*) He loves you alone, and has no other desire than to be your husband; I 'll answer for it on my life.

MARIANE, *to Valère.*

Then why did you give me that advice.

VALÈRE, *to Mariane.*

Why did you ask my advice on such a subject?

DORINE.

Oh! you are crazy, both of you. Here! give me your hands. (*To Valère*) Come, you!

VALÈRE, *giving his hand to Dorine.*

Why do you want my hand?

DORINE, *to Mariane.*

Come, yours!

MARIANE.

What is the good of all this?

DORINE.

Good heavens! quick! come! You love each other better than you think.

Mariane and Valère hold each other's hands for a time without looking at each other.

VALÈRE, *turning to Mariane.*

Do nothing that is painful to you; consider me only with less hatred. (*Mariane turns to him and smiles.*)

DORINE.

Lovers are mad, 't is very true.

VALÈRE, *to Mariane.*

But still, had I no reason to complain? Were you not, to say the least, unkind to take pleasure in saying a thing so mortifying?

MARIANE.

But you, are you not a most ungrateful man?

DORINE.

Do leave these arguments to another time, and let us now consider how to ward off this hateful marriage.

MARIANE.

Tell us what springs to put in motion.

DORINE.

We must use all, in every way we can. (*To Mariane*) Your father is being fooled. (*To Valère*) The whole affair is a deception. (*To Mariane*) But as for you, it would be best if you seemed to give a soft consent to all his folly; so that, in case the danger becomes imminent, you can delay the threatened marriage. By gaining time, all may be remedied. Sometimes you can be ill, — a sudden illness which necessitates delay; you can have met a funeral, or cracked a mirror, or dreamed of stagnant water; in short, rely on this: no one can marry you to another man unless you first say yes. But to succeed, 't is best, I think, not to be seen together. Therefore (*to Valère*) go; and without delay urge on your friends to

put you in the post they promised you. We 'll try to rouse the efforts of his brother, and bring the stepmother over to our side. Adieu.

VALÈRE, *to Mariane.*

Whatever efforts we may all prepare, my greatest hope, I own, is still in you.

MARIANE, *to Valère.*

I cannot answer for a father's will, but this I know, I will belong to none but Valère.

VALÈRE.

You crown me with joy; and, no matter who may dare —

DORINE.

Heavens! are lovers ever weary of gabbling? Go away, I tell you, go.

VALÈRE, *going a step or two, then returning.*

At least —

DORINE.

What a tongue you have! (*Pushing each by the shoulder and forcing them apart.*) You go that way — and you this.

END OF SECOND ACT.

Act Third

SCENE FIRST

DAMIS, DORINE

DAMIS.

MAY thunder blast me on the spot; may I be called a rascal everywhere, if any respect or any power restrains me from doing something desperate!

DORINE.

For Heaven's sake, moderate such fury. Your father merely talked; he will not do all that he spoke of doing; the way is long from the intention to the act.

DAMIS.

But I must stop the plotting of that pretentious villain; I have two words to whisper in his ear.

DORINE.

Gently, gently! Leave your stepmother to act toward him and toward your father, too. She has some power over Tartuffe's mind; he

is amenable to what she says, and may, perhaps, be sweet at heart upon her. Please God it may be so! that would be fine indeed! Your interests have made her send for him. She means to sound him on this marriage you detest, discover his real feelings, and let him know what horrid strife will follow if he lends hope to such a scheme. His valet tells me he is praying, so that I cannot see him; but he also said that he would soon come down. Therefore, please go away, and leave me here to wait for him.

Damis.

I can be present at their interview.

Dorine.

No; they must be alone.

Damis.

I will not say a word.

Dorine.

Nonsense. We all know how you fly into a passion; and that 's the very way to spoil our plans. Please go.

Damis.

No; I want to see their meeting for myself, and I will not get angry.

DORINE.

How annoying you are! He is coming. Do go away!

Damis hides in a cabinet at the lower end of the room.

SCENE SECOND

TARTUFFE, DORINE

TARTUFFE. *As soon as he sees Dorine he speaks loudly to his valet, who is within the house.*

Laurent, put away my hair-shirt, and also my scourge, and pray that Heaven may enlighten you. If any one calls to see me, say that I have gone to give alms with my last farthing to the prisoners.

DORINE, *aside.*

What affectation! and what boastfulness!

TARTUFFE, *to Dorine.*

Do you want me?

DORINE.

Yes, to tell you —

TARTUFFE.

Ah! in God's name, I pray you, before you say a word, take this handkerchief.

DORINE.

What for?

TARTUFFE.

To cover that bosom which I must not see. Those are sights that wound the soul, and fill our minds with guilty thoughts.

DORINE.

You must be very open to temptation if flesh can make such great impression on your senses. Sure, I know nothing of such warmth, for I myself am not so ready to take fire. I could see you naked from head to foot, and all your flesh would fail to tempt me.

TARTUFFE.

Put into your speech more modesty, or I must instantly leave the room.

DORINE.

No, no, 't is I to leave you; I have but a word to say. Madame is coming to this lower room, and asks the favor of an interview.

TARTUFFE.

Alas! most willingly.

DORINE, *aside.*

How he softens at her name! Faith, I keep to my opinion.

TARTUFFE.

Will she come soon?

DORINE.

I think I hear her. Yes, 't is she herself. I leave you now together.

SCENE THIRD

ELMIRE, TARTUFFE

TARTUFFE.

May heaven, in its great mercy, ever grant you health of soul and body; may it bless your days according to the prayer of him who is the humblest of those its love inspires.

ELMIRE.

I am most grateful for that pious wish. But let us sit down, that we may talk at ease.

TARTUFFE, *seated.*

Do you feel yourself recovered from your illness?

ELMIRE, *seated.*

Entirely; the fever soon gave way.

TARTUFFE.

My prayers have not the efficacy needed to draw that mercy from on high; but I made no pious entreaty toward heaven that did not have your convalescence for its object.

ELMIRE.

Your care for me is far too anxious.

TARTUFFE.

Who could cherish your dear health too much? To restore it I would gladly sacrifice my own.

ELMIRE.

That is carrying Christian charity too far; but, indeed, I owe you much for all this kindness.

TARTUFFE.

I do far less for you than you deserve.

ELMIRE.

I have wished to speak to you in private of a certain matter; and I am very glad to meet you here alone.

TARTUFFE.

And I am equally delighted. To find myself alone with you is very sweet to me, madame. 'T is an occasion I have often asked of Heaven, although, until to-day, it has not been granted to me.

ELMIRE.

What I desire is a moment's interview, in which your heart would open itself fully and hide nothing from me.

Damis, without being seen, slightly opens the door of the cabinet in which he is concealed and listens to the conversation.

TARTUFFE.

And I desire, also, the signal mercy of laying before your eyes my inmost soul, and of assuring you, with solemn oath, that the rumors I have spread of visitors to your attractions are not the effect of any hatred toward you, but rather of a zealous transport which impels me, and a pure —

ELMIRE.

That is how I take it; I believe that my salvation is the object of your care.

TARTUFFE, *taking Elmire's hand and pressing it.*

Yes, undoubtedly, madame; and my fervor is such —

ELMIRE.

Aië! you press my hand too hard.

TARTUFFE.

'T is through excess of zeal. To give you pain could never be my wish; indeed, I would sooner — (*Lays his hand on Elmire's knee.*)

ELMIRE.

Why do you put your hand there?

TARTUFFE.

To feel your gown; the stuff is soft.

ELMIRE.

Ah! for Heaven's sake, don't; I am very ticklish. (*Pushes back her chair. Tartuffe advances his.*)

TARTUFFE, *fingering Elmire's fichu.*

How marvellously fine is this embroidery! With what miraculous art they work in these days. Never, in any age, were such things better done.

ELMIRE.

That is true. But let us talk of our affair. They say my husband wishes to take back his word, and marry you to his daughter. Is it true? Tell me.

TARTUFFE.

He did say something of it. But, to speak truth, madame, that is not the happiness for

which I long. I find elsewhere the wondrous charm of joys to which my heart aspires.

ELMIRE.

You mean you do not love the things of earth.

TARTUFFE.

My bosom does not hold a heart of stone.

ELMIRE.

I know that all your aspirations rise to heaven, and nothing here below can win your thoughts.

TARTUFFE.

The love which binds us to eternal beauties does not suppress in us all earthly love; our senses may most easily be charmed by perfect beings formed by heaven. Its reflected light shines in your fellow-women, but in you it puts forth all its choicest marvels; it sheds upon your face a beauty which astounds all eyes, transports all hearts! Never have I seen you, perfect creature, that I did not admire in you the Author of nature, and feel my soul uplifted by the sight of this most beauteous likeness of himself. At first I apprehended that this secret ardor was but a cunning pitfall of the Evil One. My heart resolved to flee your presence, believ-

ing that you hindered my salvation. But, finally, I came to know, endearing beauty, that such a passion might not be guilty, but was, indeed, compatible with purity. 'T was then I yielded my whole heart to you. It is, I own, a great audacity to dare to offer you that heart. But my desires rely upon your kindness, and not on the vain efforts of my imperfections. In you is all my hope, my welfare, my tranquillity. On you depends my blessedness, or misery; and I am now to be, by your decision, happy, if you will, — wretched, if it pleases you.

ELMIRE.

This declaration is indeed gallant; but it is, to tell the truth, somewhat surprising. You ought, it seems to me, to guard your breast from such emotions, and reason more on a design like this. A godly man whom everybody calls —

TARTUFFE.

Because I am devout, I am not less a man; and when a man beholds your heavenly charms his heart is captured, he no longer reasons. I know that such address from me seems strange; but, madame, after all, I 'm not an angel; and if you blame the avowal I have made, you must lay the fault upon your sweet attractions. No

sooner did I see their more than human splendor than you became the sovereign ruler of my inward being. The ineffable sweetness of your gentle eyes subdued the resistance on which my heart resolved; it vanquished all, fasts, prayers, and tears, and turned my hopes and wishes to your charms. My eyes, my sighs have told you this a score of times; but now, to express it fully, I employ my voice. If you will ponder with a gracious mind the sufferings of your most unworthy slave, and grant them consolation, if to my nothingness you deign abase yourself, I will ever give you, oh sweet enchantress! unparalleled devotion. Your honor shall run no risks with me; you need fear no exposure. The young court gallants whom the women worship, are proud of their deeds and boastful in their speech. They plume themselves on their successes; they win no favors they do not divulge; and their indelicate tongues, to which so much is trusted, dishonor the altars at which they worship. But men of another stamp love with discreet devotion; with them, a woman may be sure of secrecy. The care we take to guard our own good name is guarantee enough for her we love. In us she finds, when she accepts our heart, love without scandal, pleasures without dread.

ELMIRE.

I have listened to what you say; and your rhetoric explains itself quite clearly to my mind. Do you not fear I may incline to tell my husband of your gallant ardor, and that the knowledge of a love like yours may change the friendship he now feels for you?

TARTUFFE.

No, you are too kind-hearted. I know that you will pardon my temerity; you will excuse as human frailty these violent transports of a love that wounds you, and you will own, remembering your charms, that eyes are not blind, and that a man is flesh.

ELMIRE.

Others, perhaps, might take the matter differently, but my discretion can maintain itself. I shall not tell my husband of your suit, but, in return, I want a pledge from you. It is, to honestly promote, without a quibble, the marriage of Mariane to Valère, and to renounce, yourself, the unjust power which seeks to take the prospects of another man to enrich your own.

SCENE FOURTH

DAMIS, ELMIRE, TARTUFFE

DAMIS, *coming out of the closet.*

No, madame, no; this affair must be known. I was in that place, whence I heard all; Heaven's goodness led me there, that I might confound that traitor's arrogance, open a way to vengeance on his hypocrisy, and undeceive my father by laying bare before his eyes the soul of the villain who talks to you of love.

ELMIRE.

No, Damis; it is enough if he learns wisdom and endeavors to deserve the pardon I have pledged to him. As I have made that promise do not defeat it. It is not my way to make a turmoil; a woman laughs at such vain folly, and does not fret her husband's ears with that.

DAMIS.

You have, of course, your reasons for thus acting, but I have mine for doing otherwise. The wish to spare him is a mockery. The insolent vainglory of his canting piety has too long repressed my righteous wrath, too long provoked ill-feeling in our home. The knave has ruled my father to our injury, thwarting my love and

that of Valère. My father must be undeceived about the traitor, and Heaven has given me the means to undeceive him. I am grateful indeed for this occasion; it is too favorable to be neglected; 't would be deserving every loss to have it in my hand and not to use it.

ELMIRE.

Damis —

DAMIS.

No, if you please; I must act out myself. My soul is now on the top-wave of joy! in vain would you persuade me to forego the pleasures of my revenge. I shall expose this matter without delay. Here comes my father now, as if to satisfy my wish.

SCENE FIFTH

ORGON, ELMIRE, DAMIS, TARTUFFE

DAMIS.

Father, we welcome your arrival with an incident that has just occurred, and which will much surprise you. You are finely paid for all your courtesies! Monsieur, here, returns your tenderness with noble recompense! His zeal for you has just declared itself; 't is nothing less

than seeking to dishonor you. I found him here addressing to madame the bold avowal of a guilty love. Her temper is so gentle and her heart is so discreet, that she desires with all her strength to keep this secret. But I will not condone such insolence. I think it wrong to you to hide it.

ELMIRE.

Yes, I hold that never should a wife disturb her husband's peace with such vain tales. It is not there that women's honor lies; it is enough for us that we are able to defend ourselves. These are my sentiments; and you would not have spoken, Damis, as you did if I had any influence over you. (*Exit.*)

SCENE SIXTH

ORGON, DAMIS, TARTUFFE

ORGON.

What have I heard? Oh, heaven! is it believable?

TARTUFFE.

Yes, my brother, I am wicked, guilty, a miserable sinner, filled with iniquity, the greatest criminal that ever lived. Each moment of

my life is stained with evil; 't is but a mass of crime and filth. I see that Heaven, for my chastisement, wills to mortify me upon this occasion, and whatever sin is charged against me I must not let my pride defend me. Believe what you are told; yield to your wrath, and drive me from you like a criminal. No shame can be my portion but what my sinful soul deserves yet more.

ORGON, *to his son.*

Ah! traitor, do you dare to stain the whiteness of his virtue by your lies?

DAMIS.

What! can the feigned meekness of that hypocrite make you deny —

ORGON.

Hush! cursèd tongue.

TARTUFFE.

Ah! let him speak; you blame him wrongfully. 'T were wiser to believe his tale. Why be, after the hearing of such facts, so favorable to me? Do you really know of what I 'm capable? Are you not trusting, brother, to the outward show, thinking me good by what you only see? No, no, you let yourself be tricked

by mere appearance. I am, alas, the reverse of what men think me. The world supposes me a virtuous man, but the unvarnished truth is — I am not. (*Addressing Damis*) Yes, speak, dear son; speak! call me a traitor, villain, outcast, thief, or murderer; crush me with other names still more degrading. I shall not contradict you, I deserve them; here, on my knees, I wish to bear this ignominy as the just shame for all my sinful life.

ORGON, *to Tartuffe.*

Brother! enough! (*To his son*) Does not your heart repent?

DAMIS.

What! can his words so far seduce you —

ORGON.

Hush, traitor! (*Raising Tartuffe*) Brother, rise, I beg of you! (*To his son*) Villain!

DAMIS.

Can it —

ORGON.

Be silent.

DAMIS.

I am furious. What! am I to —

ORGON.

Say but another word and I will strike you down.

TARTUFFE.

Brother, in God's name, do not show such violence. I would rather suffer any torture than that he bore for me the merest scratch.

ORGON, *to his son.*

Ungrateful wretch!

TARTUFFE.

No, leave him in peace. If need be, on my knees I pray you pardon him —

ORGON, *also falling on his knees and clasping Tartuffe.*

Alas! you mock me. (*To his son*) Knave, see his goodness!

DAMIS.

And so —

ORGON.

Silence!

DAMIS.

What! am I —

ORGON.

Silence, I say! I know the motive that leads you to attack him. You hate him, all of you; wife, children, servants are open-

mouthed against him. You impudently set all schemes in motion to drive this godly person from my house. But the more efforts that you make to banish him, the more will I employ to keep him here. I shall hasten now his marriage to my daughter, and thus confound the pride of all my family.

DAMIS.

You think you can force her to accept his hand?

ORGON.

Yes, traitor, — and this evening, too, to anger you. Ah! I will brave you all, and let you know that I will be obeyed, being your master. Come, retract your words, and instantly, you knave; down on your knees and beg his pardon.

DAMIS.

Who? I! ask pardon of that scoundrel, who, with base imposture —

ORGON.

Ha! you resist, you reprobate, and dare insult him? A stick! a stick! (*To Tartuffe*) Don't hold me back! Out! out, I say! — out of my house, and never have the audacity to enter it.

DAMIS

Yes, I will go, but —

ORGON.

Quick! out of my sight! I cut you, villain, from my will, and more than that, I curse you!

SCENE SEVENTH

ORGON, TARTUFFE

ORGON.

To insult in such a way, a saintly man!

TARTUFFE.

Oh, Heaven forgive him even as I forgive him! (*To Orgon*) If you could but know with what distress I see these efforts to blacken me to my brother.

ORGON.

Alas!

TARTUFFE.

The mere perception of this ingratitude is to my soul so hard a punishment — the horror in which I hold it — my heart is wrung so that I cannot speak; methinks that I shall die of this —

ORGON, *rushing in tears to the door through which he has driven his son.*

Wretch! I repent that this hand spared you; would I had struck you down upon the spot. (*To Tartuffe*) Compose yourself, my brother; do not be so distressed.

TARTUFFE.

Let us have done with all these grievous quarrels. I see the troubles I have brought into your house; and it is best, my brother, that I leave it.

ORGON.

What? You are jesting.

TARTUFFE.

I am detested here. I see that they are seeking to give you suspicions of my truth.

ORGON.

What matter? Has my heart listened to them?

TARTUFFE.

They will pursue that plan; and the same charges which you now reject may be, another time, believed in.

ORGON.

No, brother, never!

TARTUFFE.

Ah! my brother, a woman can easily mislead a husband's mind.

ORGON.

No, no!

TARTUFFE.

Let me go at once, and by my absence remove all cause for thus attacking me.

ORGON.

No, you shall stay; my life depends upon it.

TARTUFFE.

Alas! must I thus mortify myself? Yet, if you would only —

ORGON.

Ah!

TARTUFFE.

So be it; I will say no more. But I see plainly how I ought to act. Honor is a delicate thing; and friendship binds me to prevent all scandal and all grounds for doubt. I shall avoid your wife, and you will see me —

ORGON.

No! in the face of all you shall be with her constantly. To antagonize the world is my great happiness. I wish her to be seen with

you at all times. But that is not the whole of what I wish. To brave the world the better, I am resolved to have no other heir than you; and I shall now proceed, in some safe manner, to make you the gift of all my property. A good and honest friend, whom I have chosen for my son-in-law, is dearer far than son or wife. You will accept, I hope, what I propose?

TARTUFFE.

God's will be done in all things!

ORGON.

Poor man! Let us go at once and have the papers drawn. May envious hearts now burst with spite!

END OF ACT THIRD

Act Fourth

SCENE FIRST

CLÉANTE, TARTUFFE

CLÉANTE.

YES, all the world is talking of it; and the discussions thus caused are, you may believe me, monsieur, not to your honor. I consider this moment suitable to tell you plainly what I think in a couple of words. I do not examine too closely the tales that are told; I go behind them, and take the matter at its worst. Let us suppose that Damis has not behaved well to you; that he has even blamed you wrongfully. Is it not the duty of Christians to forgive, and to extinguish in their breasts all desire for vengeance? Ought you to allow, as the fruit of this quarrel, that a son should be driven from his father's house? I tell you again, and I speak sincerely, there is no one, great or small, who is not scandalized by it. If you take my advice, you will heal the matter and not drive it thus to extremities. Sacrifice your wrath to God, and restore the son to his father's favor.

TARTUFFE.

Alas! as for me, I would gladly do so with all my heart. I feel no bitterness against him, monsieur, — I forgive him all and make no accusation; indeed, I would willingly serve him to the best of my ability. But the interests of Heaven will not allow it. If he returns here, I must leave the house. After his conduct, which was indeed unparalleled, all intercourse between us would be scandalous, and God knows what the world would think of it. The basest policy would be imputed to me; 't would be said on all sides that, knowing myself guilty, I had feigned a charitable mercy for my accuser; that in my heart I feared him and desired to conciliate his blame and bind him thus to silence.

CLÉANTE.

You put me off with vain excuses; your reasons, monsieur, are too far-fetched. Why do you shoulder the interests of Heaven? Does Heaven need your help to punish the guilty? Leave to God the care of his own vengeance; think rather of the forgiveness he enjoins on men, and pay no heed to human judgments when you thus follow Heaven's high command. What! can the petty question of what the

world may think of a good action hinder the doing of it? No, no; let us do that which Heaven prescribes, and cease to cloud our minds with other doubts.

TARTUFFE.

I have said already that my own heart pardons him, and that is doing, monsieur, what Heaven commands. But after the scandal and the insult of to-day Heaven does not order me to live with him.

CLÉANTE.

Does it order you to turn a willing ear to what his father's whim has threatened, and to accept a gift of property to which both law and equity deny your claim?

TARTUFFE.

Those who know me will never think it is the action of a selfish soul. The goods of this world have no charms for me; their treacherous splendor does not dazzle me. If I have brought myself to take the wealth the father seeks to give me it is, in truth, because I fear that all this property may fall to wicked hands; for there are persons here who, if they share it, will put it to bad use in worldly ways, and not

employ it, as I shall do, for Heaven's glory and the good of others.

CLÉANTE.

Hey! monsieur, lay aside these sensitive fears, to which a lawful heir may well object. Permit him, without this great solicitude, to be, at his own peril, the possessor of his property; reflect that it were better he misused it than that you should have the credit of defrauding him. I am surprised that you have even listened to this proposal without disquiet. Can it be that true religion has any doctrine by which to rob legitimate heirs? If heaven has put within your heart some insurmountable barrier to intercourse with Damis, would it not be better to withdraw with honor and discretion from this house, rather than permit the son to be driven from it, without a cause, on your account? Believe me, that is the duty of an honest man, monsieur.

TARTUFFE.

Monsieur, it is half-past three o'clock; certain religious duties call me to my room. You will excuse me if I leave you thus abruptly.

CLÉANTE, *alone.*

Ha!

SCENE SECOND

ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLÉANTE, DORINE

DORINE, *to Cléante.*

For pity's sake, monsieur, help us to save Mariane; her soul is in mortal anguish. The betrothal her father has settled for to-night is driving her to despair. He is coming now. Join us, I entreat you, in trying to shake, by force or fraud, this wretched scheme which so distresses us.

SCENE THIRD

ORGON, ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLÉANTE, DORINE

ORGON.

Ah! I am glad to find you all assembled. (*To Mariane*) I bring something in this contract that will make you happy. You know already what I mean.

MARIANE, *on her knees to Orgon.*

Father! in the name of Heaven who knows my misery, by all that can touch your heart, relax your parental rights, release me from obedience; do not compel me by this harsh rule to complain to Heaven of what I owe to you!

Do not make the life which you, alas, have given me, so miserable. If, destroying the sweet hopes you let me form, you forbid me to belong to him I love, at least, I implore you, here, at your knees, spare me the torture of belonging to a man I hate. Do not drive me to despair by using all your power upon me!

ORGON, *feeling himself touched.*

Be firm, my heart! no human weakness now!

MARIANE.

Your tenderness for that man does not pain me. Show him more favors still; give him your property; and, if that is not enough, add mine. I consent with all my heart, I give it up to you; but do not ask my person. Let me spend the rest of the sad days that Heaven awards me in the austerities of a convent.

ORGON.

Ah! here, precisely, is the religion of girls when fathers thwart their amorous wishes. Stand up. The more your heart revolts against accepting him, the more your merit in submitting. Mortify your senses by this marriage, and make no further fuss about it.

DORINE.

But —

ORGON.

Be silent, you! Speak to your equals. I forbid you here to dare to say a word.

CLÉANTE.

If you will suffer me to answer with a counsel —

ORGON.

Brother, your counsels are the best in the world; they are always reasonable and I respect them. But you must excuse me if, in this case, I do not use them.

ELMIRE, *to her husband.*

Seeing what I see, I scarce know what to say. Your blindness, truly, makes me admire you. You must be enamoured of that man, biased indeed, if you deny the fact you saw to-day.

ORGON.

I do deny it; I see below the surface. I know your kindness for that rogue my son; you were afraid to disavow the trick he tried to play on that good man. You were too calm to be believed; had that thing happened, you would have shown far more emotion.

ELMIRE.

What! must a woman's honor take alarm at the mere avowal of an amorous passion? Must she reply with fire in her eyes and anger on her tongue to all who thus approach her? As for me, I simply laughed at those proposals; a hubbub about such things does not please me; I like that we should show our virtue quietly. I 'm not in favor of those savage prudes whose honor arms itself with teeth and claws, and scratches a man's face at his first word. No, Heaven preserve me from that sort of chastity. I do not want the virtue of a shrew, for I believe a cold indifference is not less certain to repulse a heart.

ORGON.

I know the truth; and I shall make no change.

ELMIRE.

Again I say I admire that strange weakness. But how would your credulity reply if I made you see that what you have been told is true.

ORGON.

See?

ELMIRE.

Yes.

ORGON.

Nonsense.

ELMIRE.

But suppose I found a way to make you see it in the clearest light?

ORGON.

Tales! idle tales!

ELMIRE.

Oh, what a man! But answer me. I am not asking you for faith in us; I say, suppose that here, by steps that I may take, you were to clearly see, and clearly hear, the truth, what would you then say of your pious man?

ORGON.

In that case I should say — I should say nothing, for it cannot be truth.

ELMIRE.

But this is going too far; you accuse my lips of falsehood. Without going farther you must, to please me, let me make you a witness of all that has been said.

ORGON.

So be it. I take you at your word. Now let us see your cleverness, and how you will fulfil the promise you have made.

ELMIRE, *to Dorine.*

Find him, and send him here.

DORINE, *to Elmire.*

But he is wily; perhaps it will be difficult to persuade him to the act.

ELMIRE, *to Dorine.*

No; we are easily duped by what we love, and self-love makes us dupe ourselves. Send him down to me. (*To Cléante and Mariane*) And you, retire.

SCENE FOURTH

ELMIRE, ORGON

ELMIRE.

Come to this table and place yourself beneath it.

ORGON.

What?

ELMIRE.

It is absolutely necessary to hide you.

ORGON.

But why under a table?

ELMIRE.

Oh, good heavens! do let me manage it. I have my plan in my head, and you shall judge of it. Put yourself there, I say; and while there, be careful that you are neither seen nor heard.

ORGON.

I confess my amiability is great; but you shall carry out your enterprise.

ELMIRE.

And you shall have nothing, as I think, to say against it. (*To her husband under the table*) But I am now to touch a peculiar matter, and you must not be scandalized in any way. Whatever I may say, you must approve. What I do is done to convince you, according to my promise. I must by blandishments (since I am forced to use them) induce that hypocrite to lay off his mask. I must encourage the bold desires of his love, and give free scope to his temerity. But, as it is for your sake only, and the better to confound him, that my heart will feign to answer to his wishes, I shall cease my part the moment that you yield; the matter will go no farther than you choose. It is for you to stop his senseless passion and spare your

wife when matters have gone far enough; you must not expose me farther than is needful to disabuse your mind. These are your interests; you must be master of them. He is coming. Keep still, and do not let yourself be seen.

SCENE FIFTH

TARTUFFE, ELMIRE, ORGON, *under the table*

TARTUFFE.

I am told that you desire to see me here.

ELMIRE.

Yes; I have certain secret things to say. But close the door before we talk together, and look about for fear we be disturbed. (*Tartuffe goes to the door and closes it, then returns.*) A scene like that we had this morning is not, assuredly, the thing we want; never did I hear of such a strange surprise. Damis alarmed me greatly on your behalf; you saw how I endeavored to restrain his action and to calm his wrath. My trouble so possessed me that I neglected, it is true, to deny his charge; but, thanks to Heaven, that very thing has turned out for the best; matters are now much safer. The esteem in which my husband holds you stayed the

storm, and he will never, I am sure, distrust you. In fact, to brave the error of false judgments, he wishes us to be together always. That is why I am able, without fear of blame, to be with you now, shut in alone; also it enables me to show a heart too ready, perhaps, to recognize your ardor.

TARTUFFE.

Such language, madame, is somewhat difficult to understand; you spoke this morning in another style.

ELMIRE.

Ah! if such refusal made you angry, how little you can know the heart of woman, or what it really means when it presents so feeble a defence! Our modesty will always combat, at a first avowal, the tender sentiments expressed to us. No matter how we justify the love that masters us, we always feel some shame at owning it. We must defend ourselves at first; but, even so, our way of doing it tells plainly that our hearts can yield; and while our lips, in honor, must deny our wishes, denials of that sort may promise all. Doubtless 't is making a too free confession; I pay, I fear, but little heed to shame; but, since the word is said, I ask you this: should I have tried to silence

Damis, should I have listened to your suit so gently, should I have taken the matter as you saw me take it, had I not found in the offer of your heart something to please me? And when I urged you to refuse that marriage just announced, what reason had I, do you think, for such insistence — unless it were the interest that is felt in you, and the fear lest such a tie might share a heart which should be all my own?

TARTUFFE.

'T is infinitely sweet, no doubt, madame, to hear such words from lips we love; their honey flows through all my senses with a luscious charm I never knew before. The happiness of pleasing you has been my chief concern; my heart has made your favor its beatitude. And yet this heart must here demand the right to doubt its own felicity. I might believe your words an honest artifice to break the marriage that is now impending; and — if I may explain myself more freely — I shall not trust your tender avowal until some portion of those favors for which I long assure me that your words are true, and plant within my heart a constant faith in the enchanting kindness you bestow upon me.

Elmire, *after coughing to warn her husband.*

What? must you hurry on with such rapidity? Must you exhaust the heart at once of all its tenderness? When one has forced one's self to make so tender an avowal, must we be told that *that* is not enough, — that you will not be satisfied unless the highest favors of all are granted?

Tartuffe.

The less we deserve, the less we dare to hope. Desires cannot be satisfied with words; a fate so glorious may well be doubted; we need to taste its joys before believing them. For me, who feel that I so little merit your great goodness, I doubt the reward of my temerity. I can trust nothing, madame, until by actual realities my love has been convinced.

Elmire.

Good heavens! your love is verily a tyrant; into what nameless trouble it has cast my soul! What mighty empire it can gain upon a heart; and with what violence it wills what it desires! How can a woman ward off your pursuit? You do not give her time to breathe! Is it becoming in you to act so roughly, — to force, without compunction, the thing you ask for, and to abuse,

by these resistless efforts, the weakness that you see is felt for you?

TARTUFFE.

But if you do, indeed, see with so kind an eye my humble homage, why refuse the certain proof I ask?

ELMIRE.

But how can I consent to what you wish without offending Heaven, of which you speak so often?

TARTUFFE.

If Heaven is all that turns you from my love, I can remove that obstacle with ease; it need not force you to withstand your heart.

ELMIRE.

But we are told to fear Heaven's punishments.

TARTUFFE.

I can disperse those fears, madame; I know the art of conquering all such scruples. 'T is true that Heaven forbids some joys, but, even so, it offers compromise. True knowledge extends the limits of our conscience according to our needs; it rectifies the evil of our actions by pureness of intention. These are secrets, madame, in which I will instruct you; you

have only to suffer me to guide you. Gratify my desires and be not afraid. I will answer for all that happens, and take the evil on myself. (*Elmire coughs.*) Your cough is troublesome.

ELMIRE.

Yes, I suffer much.

TARTUFFE.

Will it please you to try this liquorice?

ELMIRE.

The cough is obstinate. I see plainly that all the liquorice in the world will do no good.

TARTUFFE.

Ah! that is sad.

ELMIRE.

Yes; more than can be told.

TARTUFFE.

But, at least, your scruples are now removed? I do assure you of the utmost secrecy. Evil lies only in its being known; the scandal in the world is that which makes the wrong; it is not sinning when we sin in secret.

ELMIRE, *coughing again, and tapping on the table.*

I see, at last, I must resolve to yield; I must consent to grant you all you ask. With less than that I cannot now pretend to keep you satisfied. And yet, no doubt, it is a grievous thing to come to this. 'T is much against my will I cross the line; but when a man is resolute to compel it, when he will not believe what he is told, but will have proof far more convincing, a woman must needs give way and satisfy him. If this consent deserves some blame, so much the worse for him who forces it upon me; the fault, assuredly, is none of mine.

TARTUFFE.

Madame, I take it on myself, and —

ELMIRE.

Open the door, and look outside; see that my husband is nowhere in the gallery.

TARTUFFE.

There is no need to take such care for him; he is a man, between ourselves, to lead by the nose. He can be made to glory in our interviews; I 've trained him to the point of seeing all and yet believing nothing.

ELMIRE.

No matter; go out, I beg of you, — make sure; look all about you very carefully.

SCENE SIXTH

ORGON, ELMIRE

ORGON.

He is, I own it, an abominable man. Never shall I recover from this! — it overwhelms me!

ELMIRE.

But why come out so soon? You are not in earnest. Go back beneath that cloth; 't is not yet time; wait for the end, and see things still more certain. Pray do not trust to mere conjecture.

ORGON.

No, no; nothing more wicked ever came from hell.

ELMIRE.

But you ought not to be too ready to believe. Allow yourself to be convinced before you yield. Make no haste, for fear you be mistaken.

Elmire puts Orgon behind her as Tartuffe enters.

SCENE SEVENTH

TARTUFFE, ELMIRE, ORGON

TARTUFFE, *not seeing Orgon.*

All things are favorable, madame, to my happiness. I have looked around the whole apartment. No one is there, and my enraptured soul —

While Tartuffe advances with open arms to embrace Elmire she moves aside and he sees Orgon.

ORGON, *stopping Tartuffe.*

Gently! your amorous desires carry you too far; you should not thus give way to passion. Ah! ah! my godly man! so this is what you do for me: you marry my daughter, and you covet my wife! Ha! to what temptations you abandon your soul! Long did I think you honest and sincere; I thought the rest would change their tone. But here is testimony that need go no farther; I hold to this; for my part, it is all I want.

ELMIRE, *to Tartuffe.*

That which I said to you I did not mean; the things that happened led me to treat you thus.

TARTUFFE, *to Orgon.*

What! can you believe —

ORGON.

Enough! no words, I beg. Out of this house; and without ceremony, too.

TARTUFFE.

My intention was —

ORGON.

Your speeches have no longer any value Leave my house instantly.

TARTUFFE.

It is for you to leave it, — you, who call yourself its master. The house is mine and I will make you know it. I will let you see it is in vain you pick a quarrel and make these base evasions. You are not where you think yourself in offering me these insults. I have the means to frustrate and to punish such imposture; I will avenge the Heaven you wrong, and make all those who seek to drive me hence repent themselves.

SCENE EIGHTH

ELMIRE, ORGON

ELMIRE.

What words are those? What can he mean by what he says?

ORGON.

My God! it stupefies me; this is no laughing matter.

ELMIRE.

What is it?

ORGON.

I see my folly in the things he says. That gift besets my mind.

ELMIRE.

Gift?

ORGON.

Yes, the deed is done. But there is something else that makes me more uneasy still.

ELMIRE.

What is it?

ORGON.

You shall know all. But let me see at once if a certain casket is still safe upstairs.

END OF FOURTH ACT.

Act Fifth

SCENE FIRST

ORGON, CLÉANTE

CLÉANTE.

WHERE are you hurrying?

ORGON.

Alas! I know not.

CLÉANTE.

It seems to me, we should consult at once as to our wisest course under the circumstances.

ORGON.

The loss of that casket chiefly troubles me; I feel it more than all the rest.

CLÉANTE.

Then there was some important secret in it?

ORGON.

It was entrusted to my care by Argas, — the friend I pitied. He placed it in my hands with the utmost secrecy before he fled. In it

are papers on which, he told me, his life and property depend.

Cléante.

Why trust them, then, to other hands?

Orgon.

It seemed to me a case of conscience. I went to that hypocrite and asked his counsel. His arguments persuaded me to give the keeping of that box to him, that I might have, in case inquiry were made, a ready subterfuge by which my conscience could make oath against the truth without a lie.

Cléante.

Well, if we may believe appearances, you are checkmated now. This gift of all your property, this confidence you made about your friend, are — if I may speak to you as I feel — steps that you took too rashly. But as this man has such advantage over you, it is unwise, I think, to drive him to the wall. 'T were better that you found some gentler course.

Orgon.

Beneath so noble an exterior of touching fervor to hide a heart so double, a soul so wicked! And I, who welcomed him a beggar, having

nothing! Well, 't is all over with me now! I renounce all intercourse with pious men; henceforth I hold such characters in horror, and I will be a very devil in pursuit of them.

CLÉANTE.

Well, well! now here you yield to one of your excitements; you cannot keep an even temperature; your mind is never strictly just. Always from one extreme you fly to another. You see your error; you admit that you were taken in by cant; but is it necessary, in order to correct your blunder, that you should rush into a still worse error, and confound the hearts of all religious men with that of a treacherous vagabond? What! because a rascal dupes you boldly beneath a pompous show of sanctimonious piety, must all the world be like him, and no true godly men be found? Leave such absurd conclusions to free-thinkers; distinguish virtue from its counterfeit. Be careful not to give your confidence too rashly; keep to the happy medium that is wise; avoid, if you can, doing honor to hypocrisy; but be careful, also, not to insult the truly pious man. If you must fall into extremes, better the one you lately left.

SCENE SECOND

ORGON, CLÉANTE, DAMIS

DAMIS.

Father! is it true that a villain threatens you, that he has wiped your benefactions from his mind, and his base soul, deserving of disgust, turns all your kindness into arms against you?

ORGON.

Yes, my son; and the suffering he has caused me is unparalleled.

DAMIS.

Leave him to me; I'll cut his ears off! Against his insolence no quarter should be given. It is my duty with one blow to free you. I'll strike him down and end the matter.

CLÉANTE.

Ha! that is young men's talk. Moderate, if you please, these dashing transports. We live beneath a reign and in an age when violence is not the way to win our rights.

SCENE THIRD

MADAME PERNELLE, ORGON, ELMIRE, CLÉANTE, MARIANE, DAMIS, DORINE

MADAME PERNELLE.

What is all this? I have heard dreadful things.

ORGON.

Yes, dreadful things, to which mine eyes bear witness. You see the payment here of all my kindness. With hearty zeal I succor a man in poverty; I take him to my home and treat him like a brother; I load him, day by day, with benefits, — give him my daughter and all my property; and while I do so, the villain, the traitor, attempts his foul design of tampering with my wife. And, not content with such base actions, he dares to turn my benefits against me, and for my ruin means to use the advantages with which my unwise goodness armed him. He seeks to drive us from this house, which I transferred to him, and bring me to the state from which I rescued him.

DORINE.

Poor man!

MADAME PERNELLE.

My son, I cannot in the least believe he means to do so foul an action.

ORGON.

What?

MADAME PERNELLE.

Devout and godly men are always envied.

ORGON.

Mother, what do you mean in saying that?

MADAME PERNELLE.

Your home is managed in so strange a way; and we all know the hatred that pursues him.

ORGON.

That hatred did not cause the things I tell you.

MADAME PERNELLE.

My son, I taught you a hundred times, when you were little, that virtue in this world is always persecuted. Envious persons die, but envy never.

ORGON.

But what has that to do with the facts that now have happened?

MADAME PERNELLE.

They have invented these foolish tales against him.

ORGON.

I told you that I saw those facts myself.

MADAME PERNELLE.

The malice of reviling minds is great.

ORGON.

Mother! you 'll drive me crazy! I tell you that I saw with my own eyes the audacious crime.

MADAME PERNELLE.

The venom of their tongues is never lacking; and nothing here below escapes it.

ORGON.

There is no sense in what you say. I have seen, I tell you, seen, seen with my own eyes, — what is called *seen!* Must I deafen you with the word, and shout it till I 'm hoarse?

MADAME PERNELLE.

But half the time appearances deceive us; we must not always judge by what we see.

ORGON.

I am furious!

MADAME PERNELLE.

Human nature is given to suspicion; good deeds are frequently interpreted as vice.

ORGON.

Yes! I ought to interpret as a charitable deed the desire to embrace my wife!

MADAME PERNELLE.

Before you accuse another, you ought to have just cause for doing so; you should wait until your eyes are sure of things.

ORGON.

The devil! how would you have them sure? Must I wait until I actually see — Mother, you will make me say some foolish thing.

MADAME PERNELLE.

His soul is filled with far too pure a zeal; I can't at all admit into my mind that he ever wished to do the things you say.

ORGON.

There! there! if you were not my mother I don't know what I might not say, so angry am I!

DORINE, *to Orgon.*

'T is the just requital, monsieur, of all things here below. Time was when you would not believe, and now — none believe you.

CLÉANTE.

We are losing time on this mere nonsense when we ought to be taking measures of defence. That scoundrel's threat must not be slumbered on.

DAMIS.

Surely his effrontery dares not go so far?

ELMIRE.

No, I cannot believe he will persist. His base ingratitude would be too visible.

CLÉANTE, *to Orgon.*

Don't trust to that; he will have ways to make his cause seem right. In any case, the weight of a cabal embarrasses a man in serious trouble. I say again, armed as he is with what he holds from you, you must not drive him to extremities.

ORGON.

True; but what am I to do? The traitor triumphs in the fact that I was not master of my indignation.

CLÉANTE.

I wish with all my heart there were some way to bring a show of peace between you, and so mend matters.

ELMIRE.

If I had known he had such weapons in his hand, I would never have given cause for such attack; my —

ORGON, *to Dorine, seeing Monsieur Loyal enter.*

Who is that man? What does he want? Find out. I am not in a state to see a visitor.

SCENE FOURTH

ORGON, MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, MARIANE, CLÉANTE, DAMIS, DORINE, MONSIEUR LOYAL

MONSIEUR LOYAL, *to Dorine at the back of the stage.*

Good-day, my dear; manage, if you please, that I may speak to your master

DORINE.

He has company. I doubt if he can see any one just now.

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

I am not here to trouble him; my coming will not, I think, displease him; in fact, I am here on a matter for which he will be glad.

DORINE.

Your name, if you please.

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

Tell him only that I come from Monsieur Tartuffe, for his good.

DORINE, *returning to Orgon.*

It is a man with a civil manner, who comes from Monsieur Tartuffe on a matter for which, he says, you will be glad.

CLÉANTE, *to Orgon.*

You ought to see the man and find out what he wants.

ORGON, *to Cléante.*

It may be that he comes to heal the matter. What feelings do you think I ought to show?

CLÉANTE.

Your indignation must not be expressed; if he speaks of compromise you should listen to him.

MONSIEUR LOYAL, *to Orgon.*

Your servant, monsieur. May Heaven confound all those who seek to injure you, and be as favorable to your interests as I desire.

ORGON, *low to Cléante.*

That civil opening agrees with my opinion, and shows already the prospect of a compromise.

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

Your family, monsieur, is always dear to me; I was, you know, your father's servant.

ORGON.

Monsieur, I am much ashamed and ask your pardon, but I do not know you or recall your name.

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

My name is Loyal; a native of Normandy. I am sheriff's officer — in spite of envy. For forty years I have, thanks be to Heaven, performed my duties with much credit. I now come, monsieur, with your permission, to serve an ordinance —

ORGON.

What! you are here to —

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

Monsieur, no anger. This is merely a summons, an order to vacate this house, both you and yours; to remove your furniture, and to make room for others without delay, — as the law requires.

ORGON.

I! to leave this house?

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

Yes, monsieur, if you please. The house belongs, as you know, without contestation, to the good Monsieur Tartuffe. He is henceforth the lord and master of all your landed property, in virtue of a contract which is now in my hands. It is in proper legal form, and there is nothing to say against it.

DAMIS, *to Monsieur Loyal.*

This impudence is great! I admire it, faith!

MONSIEUR LOYAL, *to Damis.*

Monsieur, I have nothing to say to you. (*Pointing to Orgon*) My words are addressed to monsieur; he is calm and reasonable; he knows the duty of a righteous man too well to wish to oppose the law.

ORGON.

But —

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

Yes, monsieur; I know that for millions of gold you would not be rebellious; you will, I am sure, allow me as an honest man to execute my orders.

DAMIS.

For my part, Mr. Sheriff's-officer, that black gown of yours attracts my stick.

MONSIEUR LOYAL, *to Orgon.*

Make your son keep silence, monsieur, or send him away. I should regret to write his words in my report.

DORINE, *aside.*

Monsieur Loyal looks finely disloyal.

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

For good and pious men I feel the greatest sympathy, monsieur. I asked to serve this summons myself, to oblige you by doing it pleasantly, and to prevent some other officer from being chosen who, not having the zeal I feel for you and yours, might serve these papers in a painful way.

ORGON.

What can be more painful than to be ordered to leave my home?

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

I give you time. I will postpone until to-morrow the execution of the ordinance. I shall come to-night with ten of my men, without noise or scandal, and sleep here. You will, for form's sake, hand me, if you please, before you go to bed, the keys of the house. I shall be careful not to disturb you. Nothing will be allowed that is unseemly. But to-morrow morning you must make haste to clear these premises, to the last utensil. My men shall help you; I will bring strong men, able to put your property outside at once. No one, I think, could treat you better than I do; and as I show you this extreme indulgence I trust you will return it, monsieur, by not disturbing me in any way while I perform my duties.

ORGON, *aside*.

I'd give, with all my heart, here, on the spot, a hundred of my last remaining crowns if I could plant a mighty blow on the brute's muzzle!

CLÉANTE, *low to Orgon.*

Hush! spoil nothing.

DAMIS.

Hardly can I contain myself! What audacity! My hands are itching to be at him.

DORINE.

Hey! Monsieur Loyal, on your broad back a little beating, seems to me, would do no harm.

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

Such language, my dear, is liable to punishment; decrees are issued against women also.

CLÉANTE, *to Monsieur Loyal.*

Come, monsieur, make an end of this; give me the papers, and leave us, for Heaven's sake.

MONSIEUR LOYAL.

Till we meet again! Heaven keep you all in peace.

ORGON.

May Heaven confound you, and the man who sent you!

SCENE FIFTH

ORGON, MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, CLÉANTE, MARIANE, DAMIS, DORINE

ORGON.

Well, mother; now you see that I was right. You can judge of all the rest by this affair. Do you admit his treachery now?

MADAME PERNELLE.

I am bewildered — I am aghast! Can such things be?

DORINE, *to Orgon.*

You were wrong when you pitied and protected him, and now you are wrong to be so angry. Remember that his pious purposes are helped by what he does; his virtue's crown is love to others; he knows how riches can corrupt mankind, and in pure charity he takes away so great an obstacle to your salvation.

ORGON.

Be silent! That is an order I give you frequently.

CLÉANTE, *to Orgon.*

Let us seek some legal counsel in this matter.

ELMIRE.

Yes; and publish to all the world the man's ingratitude. This proceeding must destroy the virtue of the contract; his disloyalty will now appear so black it cannot win the triumph that you fear.

SCENE SIXTH

VALÈRE, ORGON, MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, CLÉANTE, MARIANE, DAMIS, DORINE

VALÈRE.

With great regret, I come to pain you, monsieur; but a pressing danger forces me to do so. A friend with whom I am most intimate, one who knows the interest I have a right to take in you and yours, has violated for me the secrecy maintained in State affairs. He sends me information which must, I fear, compel you to immediate flight. The scoundrel who imposed on you so long has now, within an hour, denounced you to the prince, and placed within his hands a casket of important papers, belonging to a political criminal, whose guilty secrets he declares you have concealed, against your duty as a loyal subject. I do not know the details of the wrong of which he thus accuses you, but a warrant was issued to arrest you

instantly; and Tartuffe is ordered, for its better execution, to accompany the officer.

CLÉANTE.

This is the weapon by which he secures his rights! The traitor means in this way to make himself master of your property.

ORGON.

The man is a wicked being, I admit it.

VALÈRE.

The slightest dallying may be fatal. My carriage is at the door to take you hence, and I have brought a thousand louis for your convenience. Let us lose no time; the attack is violent; nothing can parry such a blow as this but flight. I offer to conduct you to a place of safety, and ask that I may share to the very end your flight.

ORGON.

Alas, how much I owe to your kind thoughtfulness! I must take another time to thank you, but I pray Heaven in its mercy to reward, some day, your generous service. Farewell, all of you; take care of everything.

CLÉANTE.

Go at once; we will attend to all there is to do.

SCENE SEVENTH

TARTUFFE, AN OFFICER OF POLICE, ORGON, MADAME PERNELLE, ELMIRE, CLÉANTE, MARIANE, VALÈRE, DAMIS, DORINE

TARTUFFE, *stopping Orgon.*

Gently, monsieur, gently; not so fast. You have not far to go to find your lodgings. In the prince's name, you are a prisoner.

ORGON.

Traitor! you have kept this final stroke for the last. This is the blow, you wretch, by which you crush me; this is the crown of your disloyalty!

TARTUFFE.

Your insults cannot now embitter me; I have learned of Heaven how to suffer all.

CLÉANTE.

Your magnanimity is great indeed!

DAMIS.

Ha! with what impudence the scoundrel talks of Heaven!

TARTUFFE.

Your fiery passions cannot move me; my single thought is how to do my duty.

MARIANE.

A noble duty you have undertaken here! you 'll find great glory in it!

TARTUFFE.

All tasks are glorious when ordered by the power who sends me.

ORGON.

Have you no memory, ungrateful man, that my hand drew you from a state of misery?

TARTUFFE.

I know the succor I received, but my first duty is to my prince; the just demands of that most sacred duty must stifle in my heart mere gratitude; and I would sacrifice to these all-powerful ties friends, parents, wife, myself as well.

ELMIRE.

Impostor!

DORINE.

How well he knows with treacherous art to make himself a cloak of all we most revere.

CLÉANTE, *to Tartuffe.*

But if the zeal you boast of is so great, how happens it you gave no sign of duty to your prince until your benefactor had surprised you

in tampering with his wife? Why did you never think of thus denouncing him until his honor forced him to turn you out of doors? I am not seeking to dissuade you from taking the gift he made, but, let me ask, considering him so guilty now, how is it you are willing to take anything from such a man?

TARTUFFE, *to the Officer of Police.*

Protect me, monsieur, from these clamorings. Have the goodness to perform your duty, if you please.

OFFICER.

Yes, I have put it off, I think, too long; your own lips warn me to fulfil it. Therefore, in order that I do so, follow me at once to the prison, where I am told to lodge you.

TARTUFFE.

Who? I, monsieur?

OFFICER.

Yes, you.

TARTUFFE.

Why to prison?

OFFICER.

To you I give no answer. (*To Orgon*) Monsieur, dismiss all anxious fears. We live

beneath a prince the foe of fraud, — a prince whose eyes can penetrate all hearts; whose mind the art of no impostor can deceive. His great soul, gifted with a clear discernment, casts a straight glance on all things. In him no bias gains admittance, and his firm mind falls into no excess. He gives to righteous men immortal glory; but without blindness does he show his zeal; love for the truly good in no way shuts his eyes to all the baseness of a hypocrite. This one was powerless to mislead him; those wily schemes he instantly detected, discerning with his keen sagacity the inmost folds of that most treacherous heart. Coming to denounce you, the wretch betrayed himself; and by the stroke of some high justice the prince discovered him, by his own words, to be a great impostor, of whose misdeeds under another name he was informed. In a word, the monarch, detesting his disloyalty and base ingratitude to you (added to all his other evil deeds) ordered me to follow him here and see to what lengths his impudence would go, and then to do justice on him for your sake. Yes, I am ordered to take from his person the papers which he boasts of holding, and place them in your hands. The king, of his sovereign power,

annuls the deed you made him of your property; and he forgives you for the secret to which your friendship for an exile led you. This is the recompense he grants for your past zeal in fighting for his cause; he shows you that his heart knows — when the world least thinks it — how to reward good actions, — that true deserving is never lost upon him, and that his heart remembers good far more than evil.

DORINE.

Now Heaven be praised!

MADAME PERNELLE.

I breathe again!

ELMIRE.

Oh blessed ending!

MARIANE.

Who could have dared to hope it?

ORGON, *to Tartuffe, whom the Officer is taking away.*

Ha! ha! traitor, what are you now?

SCENE EIGHTH

MADAME PERNELLE, ORGON, ELMIRE, CLÉANTE, MARIANE, VALÈRE, DAMIS, DORINE

CLÉANTE.

Ah! brother, stop! do not descend to such unworthiness; leave that miserable man to his unhappy fate; do not add to the remorse that overwhelms him. Pray rather that his heart from this day forth may happily return to virtue, and so detest his vice as to reform his practice; pray also that the prince may temper justice. Then go yourself, and on your knees, return the prince due thanks for this most gentle treatment.

ORGON.

Yes, you are right. Let us kneel at his feet and thank him for the kindness his heart has shown. Then, having done that duty we will perform another, and crown by happy marriage the sincere and generous suit of an honest lover.

END OF TARTUFFE.

LES PRÉCIEUSES RIDICULES

Comedy

IN ONE ACT

PREFACE BY MOLIÈRE

IT is a strange thing that men will print a writer against his wishes. I know nothing more unjust; and I would pardon any other violence than that.

It is not that I wish to play the modest author, and disparage, out of propriety, my comedy. I should very ill-advisedly offend all Paris if I thus accused it of applauding a poor thing. As the public is absolute judge of works of this sort, it would be very impertinent in me to contradict it; besides, if I had the worst opinion in the world of my "Précieuses Ridicules" before the play was acted, I must believe now that it is worth something, because so many persons have joined in speaking well of it. But, as a vast deal of the charm that has been found in it depends on the acting and on the tones of the voices, it was of great importance to me that it should not be seen deprived of those advantages. Therefore I thought its success on the

stage was great enough to keep it there, and I resolved, as I say, to let it be seen only by candle-light, so that no one might have a chance to quote the proverb. I was determined that my play should not jump from the boards of the Théâtre de Bourbon to the Galerie du Palais.[1]

Nevertheless, I have been unable to avoid it; and I have had the mortification of seeing a stolen copy of my play in the hands of booksellers, accompanied by a license obtained surreptitiously. In vain for me to cry: *O tempora! O mores!* I have been made to see the necessity of printing my play myself or, of having a lawsuit on my hands. The last evil would be worse than the first; I must, therefore, yield to fate and consent to a thing which would otherwise be done by others without me.

Good heavens! what strange agitation one feels in bringing out a book; and how raw an author is the first time his writings are printed! If I could only have had more time I might, perhaps, have done better for myself; I might have taken those precautions which Messieurs

[1] Where the book-shops congregated. The proverb is: "Handsome by candle-light, daylight spoils all." Molière's judgment was sound. This is an acting play, rather than a reading one; and the reader as he reads must imagine it acted. — Tr.

the authors (now my co-workers) are accustomed to take on such occasions. Besides taking some great lord, against his will, as the protector of my work, whose liberality I should have tempted by a flourishing dedicatory epistle, I might have tried to write a fine and learned preface; for I am not without plenty of books which would have furnished me with all the learned things that can possibly be said about tragedy and comedy, the etymology of both, their origin, their definition, and all the rest of it.

I should also have spoken to my friends, who, in order to recommend my play, would not have refused me some French or Latin verses; in fact, I have some who could have praised me in Greek; and we all know that praise in Greek is of wonderful efficacy at the beginning of a book. But I am forced into publication without giving me time to look about me; I cannot even obtain permission to say more than two words on the subject of this comedy. I should have liked to show clearly that it is kept throughout strictly within the limits of honest and permissible satire; that the most excellent things are liable to be copied by miserable imitators who deserve to be laughed at and whose mischievous travesties of things which are most

perfect have been, in all ages, the subject of comedy. For this reason, truly learned men, and truly brave ones, have never taken offence at the comic Doctor or the Capitan; nor have judges, princes, and kings been affronted at seeing Trivelin, or some other actor, turn judges, princes, and kings, into ridicule. So, then, the true *précieuses* would do wrong to be annoyed when I laugh at the ridiculous ones who imitate them so badly.

But, as I have said, I am not allowed time even to breathe; Monsieur de Luynes is waiting to bind me; very well, then, since 't is the will of God.

PERSONAGES.

LAGRANGE . . . . } *Rejected suitors.*
DU CROISY . . . . }
GORGIBUS . . . . . *Plain bourgeois.*
MADELON . . . . . *Daughter of Gorgibus* } *Précieuses*
CATHOS . . . . . *Niece of Gorgibus* } *Ridicules.*
MAROTTE . . . . . *Maid to the Précieuses Ridicules.*
ALMANZOR . . . . *Lacquey to the Précieuses Ridicules.*
THE MARQUIS DE MASCARILLE . . . . *Valet to Lagrange.*
THE VICOMTE DE JODELET . . . . . *Valet to Du Croisy.*
TWO SEDAN-CHAIR BEARERS
NEIGHBORING LADIES.
MUSICIANS.

The scene is in Paris, in the house of Gorgibus.

LES PRÉCIEUSES RIDICULES

SCENE FIRST

LAGRANGE, DU CROISY

DU CROISY.

SEIGNEUR Lagrange!

LAGRANGE.

What?

DU CROISY.

Look at me solemnly.

LAGRANGE.

Well, there then!

DU CROISY.

What do you think of our visit? Are you satisfied?

LAGRANGE.

In your opinion, have we any ground to be satisfied, either of us?

DU CROISY.

Not precisely, to tell the truth.

LAGRANGE.

As for me, I own to you that I am scandalized. Did any one ever see, I 'd like to know, two provincial minxes play the finical fine lady like that? Were ever two men treated with more contempt? They could hardly bring themselves to offer chairs. I never saw such whisperings as they held together, such yawnings, such rubbing of the eyes, such repeated asking of, "What time is it?" Did they answer anything but yes and no to what we said? You must agree that if we had been the lowest of the low they could n't have treated us worse than they did.

DU CROISY.

It seems to me you take the matter very much to heart.

LAGRANGE.

Of course I do; I take it in such a way that I mean to be revenged for such impertinence. I know what caused us to be so despised. The *précieux* style has not only affected Paris, it has spread into the provinces, and these ridicu-

lous damsels have imbibed their share of it. In short, they are a medley of *précieuse* and coquette. I see what 's required to be received into their favor; and if you 'll listen to me, we will play them both a trick which shall show them their folly, and may teach them to know their company a little better.

DU CROISY.

But how? tell me how.

LAGRANGE.

I have a valet, named Mascarille, who passes in the minds of a good many persons for a species of wit, — for there 's nothing cheaper than wit nowadays. He is a wild fellow, who has taken it into his head to play the man of rank; he plumes himself on his verses and his gallantry, and looks down on the other valets, whom he is pleased to call brutes.

DU CROISY.

Well, what can you do with him?

LAGRANGE.

Do? why this — But first let us get away from here.

SCENE SECOND

GORGIBUS, DU CROISY, LAGRANGE

GORGIBUS.

So! you've seen my niece and my daughter. Did matters go right? What is the result of the visit?

LAGRANGE.

That is a thing you can better hear from them than from us. All that we can say is that we return you thanks for the favor you have shown us, and we remain your very humble servants.

DU CROISY.

Your very humble servants.

GORGIBUS, *alone.*

Hey-day! they seem to be going off dissatisfied. What reason have they for displeasure? I must find out what this means. Holà, there!

SCENE THIRD

MAROTTE, GORGIBUS

MAROTTE.

What do you want, monsieur?

GORGIBUS.

Where are your mistresses?

MAROTTE.

In their dressing-room.

GORGIBUS.

What are they doing?

MAROTTE.

Making salve for the lips.

GORGIBUS.

Too much salve, altogether. Tell them to come down.

SCENE FOURTH

GORGIBUS, *alone.*

Those jades with their salves and things want to ruin me, I think. I see nothing about but whites of eggs, virgin's milk, and a hundred other concoctions I don't know the names of. Since they came into this house they have used the lard of a dozen pigs at the very least; and four valets could have been fed every day on the sheep's feet they use up.

SCENE FIFTH

MADELON, CATHOS, GORGIBUS

GORGIBUS.

It is very necessary, truly, to be at such expense just to grease your noses. Let me hear what you have done to those gentlemen who have gone out from here in such displeasure. Did I not tell you to receive them as persons whom I intend you to marry?

MADELON.

But what esteem, father, can you expect us to have for persons who proceed in this irregular manner?

CATHOS.

How is it possible, uncle, for a girl of any mind to put up with their presence?

GORGIBUS.

What have you to say against them?

MADELON.

Fine gallantry, theirs! What, begin by marriage?

GORGIBUS.

How else do you wish them to begin, — by concubinage? Are not their proposals a matter

for which you have as good reason to be glad as I? Could anything be more fortunate? This sacred tie to which they aspire, is n't it a proof of the excellence of their intentions?

MADELON.

Oh! father, what you say is so shockingly common. I feel ashamed to hear you talk in that way; you really ought to let us teach you the higher style of things.

GORGIBUS.

I want neither style nor nonsense. I tell you that marriage is a sacred and holy thing, and it is the duty of virtuous folk to begin with it.

MADELON.

Oh, heavens! if all the world were like you a novel would soon be ended. A fine thing, indeed, if Cyrus wedded Mandane at once, and Aronce married Clélie without the smallest difficulty.

GORGIBUS.

What is the girl talking about?

MADELON.

Here is my cousin, father, who will tell you, as I do, that marriage should never take place

until the other adventures have occurred. A lover, to be agreeable, must know how to utter fine sentiments; insinuate the soft, the tender, the passionate; and put his suit through certain forms. In the first place, he must see the person with whom he falls in love at church, or out walking, or at some public ceremony; or else he must be fatefully conducted by some relation or friend to her house, from which he issues dreamy and melancholy. He hides his passion for the beloved object for a time; and yet he pays her several visits, at which he never fails to bring upon the tapis some question of gallantry which exercises the minds of all present. The day of the declaration arrives; this ought, usually, to be made in the secluded alley of a garden, while the company remain at some distance; and this declaration must be met by instant anger, which calls up our blushes, and banishes the lover from our presence — for a time. After that, he finds a way to appease us, to accustom us insensibly to the discourse of passion, and to draw from us that avowal which we make with the utmost pain. Then follow vicissitudes, — rivals casting themselves athwart this established inclination, persecutions of fathers, jealousies conceived from false ap-

pearances, laments, despair, elopement, and all that follows. That is how things are treated in the modish style of fine manners; these are rules of true gallantry which cannot be dispensed with. But to come bluntly, without preamble, to conjugal union, to seize romance by the tail — oh! my dear father, nothing could be more shop-keeping than that; the very idea of it makes me sick at my stomach.

Gorgibus.

What devilish jargon is all this? Here's your high style indeed!

Cathos.

Indeed, uncle; my cousin goes to the truth of the matter. How can we receive men who are so utterly incongruous in gallantry? I would lay a wager they never heard of the map of Tender, and that Billet-doux, Lovers'-cares, Gallant-note, and Pretty-verse are an unknown land to them.[1] Is it not apparent that their

[1] The map of Tender. A sentimental absurdity in Mlle de Scudéry's "Clélie." In order to reach the city of Tender, which stood upon the river of Inclination flowing through the lake of Indifference to the sea of Danger, it was necessary to besiege the town of Respect, carry the villages of Billet-doux, Gallant-note,

whole person signifies as much? They have not at all the air which gives a good opinion of men at first sight. Think of making a lover's call with plain legs, no ruffles, hats without plumes, an ill-regulated style of hair, and coats which suffer from penury of ribbons! Good heavens, fancy such lovers! What frugality of garb, what barrenness of conversation! It is not to be endured; we cannot submit to it! I remarked also that their shirt-frills were not made by a good maker, and their breeches lacked more than half a foot of being the proper width.

GORGIBUS.

They are mad, both of them; I can't understand one word of this gibberish. Cathos, and you, Madelon —

MADELON.

Oh! for pity's sake, father, do give up those barbarous names, and call us differently.

GORGIBUS.

Barbarous names! Are not they your baptismal names?

Pretty-Verse, Compliance, Submission, and others, capture the castle of Lovers'-cares, and force the hamlet of Assiduity — TR.

MADELON.

Heavens! how vulgar you are! As for me, it is one of my astonishments that you ever had a daughter as refined as I. Who ever heard of a Cathos or a Madelon in the modish style? You must admit that either of those names would be enough to ruin the finest novel in the world.

CATHOS.

It is quite true, uncle, that a delicate ear throbs painfully on hearing the pronunciation of such words. The name of Polixène, which my cousin has chosen, and that of Aminte, which I take, have a grace which I think you must perceive.

GORGIBUS.

Listen to me; one word is enough. I shall not hear of your being called by any other names than those your godfathers and godmothers gave you in baptism. And as for the gentlemen in question, I know their families and their estates, and I am determined that you shall agree to receive them as husbands; the care of two girls is too heavy a burden for a man of my age.

Cathos.

As for me, uncle, all I can say is that I think marriage an altogether shocking thing. How is it possible to endure the idea of sleeping with a man in the room?

Madelon.

Please allow us to breathe a little in the fine world of Paris, where we have only just arrived. Do leave us free to weave the tissue of our romance without pressing on the conclusion.

Gorgibus, *aside.*

They are downright fools, no doubt of it! (*Aloud*) Once more I say, I shall not listen to such stuff. I intend to be master here; and, to cut the matter short, you will either be married, both of you, at once, or you shall go into a nunnery. I swear a good round oath to that.

SCENE SIXTH

Cathos, Madelon

Cathos.

Heavens! my dear, how your father is sunk in materialism! His intellect is so dense that his soul seems darkened.

MADELON.

How can I help it, dear? I am ashamed of him; I can't believe that I am really his daughter. I fancy at times that some strange thing will happen and reveal that my birth was more illustrious.

CATHOS.

I could well believe it; yes, there is every appearance of it. As for myself, when I look at what I am, I —

SCENE SEVENTH

CATHOS, MADELON, MAROTTE

MAROTTE.

There 's a lacquey down below who asks if you are at home, and says that his master wants to come and see you.

MADELON.

Learn, ignorant girl, to express yourself less vulgarly. Say: "A requisite is here who asks if it is for your conveniency to be visible."

MAROTTE.

Goodness! I can't talk Latin; I never learned philosophy, like you, out of the "Grand Cyre."

MADELON.

Impertinent creature! Must one submit to it? Who is the master of this lacquey?

MAROTTE.

He called him the Marquis de Mascarille.

MADELON.

Ah! my dear, a marquis! a marquis! Yes, go and say that he can see us. No doubt it is some modish wit who has heard tell of us.

CATHOS.

Undoubtedly, my dear.

MADELON.

We had better receive him in this lower room rather than in our chamber. Let us arrange our hair a little and sustain our reputation. Quick, Marotte, here, and hold up before us the counsellor of the graces.

MAROTTE.

Faith! I don't know what the creature is. Speak Christian, if you want me to make out what you say.

CATHOS.

Bring a looking-glass, ignorant girl; and be careful you do not sully it by the communication of your own image. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE EIGHTH

MASCARILLE, *in a sedan chair*, TWO PORTERS.

MASCARILLE.

Holà, there, porters! holà, là, là! — I think these scoundrels want to break my bones, banging against the walls and pavements.

FIRST PORTER.

Hang it! the door is so narrow; and you would have us bring you inside.

MASCARILLE.

I should think so, indeed, you rascals! Would you have me expose the puffiness of my plumes to the inclemencies of the rainy season, and imprint my shoes in the mud. Be off with you; take your chair out of here.

SECOND PORTER.

Then pay us if you please, monsieur.

MASCARILLE.

Hey?

SECOND PORTER.

I say, monsieur, that we want our money, if you please.

MASCARILLE, *boxing his ears.*

What, you knave! ask money of a person of my quality!

SECOND PORTER.

Is that the way to pay poor men? Will your quality give us a dinner?

MASCARILLE.

Ha! ha! ha! I 'll teach you to know your place! These louts presume to make game of me!

FIRST PORTER, *seizing one of the poles of the chair.*

Here! here! pay us at once.

MASCARILLE.

What?

FIRST PORTER.

I say I mean to have that money now.

MASCARILLE.

He 's reasonable, that fellow.

FIRST PORTER.

Make haste.

MASCARILLE.

Yes, yes; you speak as you ought; but that other man is a clown who does n't know what he is talking about. There, are you satisfied?

FIRST PORTER.

No, I am not satisfied; you struck my comrade, and— (*Lifting the pole.*)

MASCARILLE.

Gently, gently, — here, that's for the blow. People can get anything out of me if they take me the right way. You can go now, and come back in time to get me to the Louvre for the king's *coucher*.

SCENE NINTH

MAROTTE, MASCARILLE

MAROTTE.

Monsieur, my mistresses will be here presently.

MASCARILLE.

Tell them not to hasten; I am posted here most comfortably while awaiting them.

MAROTTE.

Here they are now.

SCENE TENTH

MADELON, CATHOS, MASCARILLE, ALMANZOR

MASCARILLE, *after making his salutations.*

Mesdames, you will doubtless be surprised at the audacity of my visit; but your reputation has drawn this annoyance upon you; distinguished merit has such charms for me that I pursue it wherever I can find it.

MADELON.

If it is merit you pursue, you must hunt on other land than ours.

CATHOS.

In order to find merit here you have had to bring it with you.

MASCARILLE.

Ah! I inscribe myself in abjuration of your words. Fame is truthful in speaking of your worth; you will hold hearts for trumps and win all tricks from the most gallant men in Paris.

MADELON.

Your complaisance extends the liberality of its praise too far; we must be careful, my cousin here and I, not to be too seriously taken by your dulcet flattery.

CATHOS.

My dear, we ought to offer chairs.

MADELON.

Ho! there, Almanzor.

ALMANZOR.

Madame.

MADELON.

Quick! convey to us the conveniences of conversation.

MASCARILLE.

But first, what safety is there here for me?

CATHOS.

What do you fear?

MASCARILLE.

Some theft of my heart, some stab to my freedom. I see two pairs of eyes, which look to me like mischievous fellows, ready to attack all liberties, and treat a soul as Turk to Moor. Hey, what the devil! no sooner do we approach them than they stand at once upon their murderous guard. Ah, faith! I do distrust them. I must forthwith run away, or have some sound security that they will not assault me.

MADELON.

My dear, the sportive style of man.

CATHOS.

Yes, plainly an Amilcar.[1]

MADELON.

Fear nothing; our eyes have no such base designs; your heart may rest in peace upon the assurance of their equity.

CATHOS.

But, in pity, monsieur, be not inexorable to that easy chair, which, for the last ten minutes, extends its arms to you; gratify, we beg, the desire it has to clasp you.

MASCARILLE, *after patting his wig, and arranging his ruffles.*

And you, mesdames, what say you of Paris?

MADELON.

Alas! what can we say? We should need to be the antipodes of reason not to confess that Paris is the great emporium of marvels, — the centre of good taste, and wit, and gallantry.

[1] A character in "Clélie." The word was used among the *précieuses* of the day to mean sprightly, lively, sportive.

MASCARILLE.

For my part, I think there is no salvation for decent people out of Paris.

CATHOS.

That is a most indisputable truth.

MASCARILLE.

'T is rather a muddy place, but we have sedans.

MADELON.

Yes, the sedan is truly a marvellous curtailment of the insults of mud and the inclemencies of weather.

MASCARILLE.

You receive, of course, many visitors. Who may the wits be who frequent you?

MADELON.

Alas! we are not yet known. But we are in the way to being so; we have a most particular friend who has promised to bring to visit us all the gentlemen whose writings appear in the "Collections of Choice Pieces." [1]

[1] These collections (*Recueils*) were of manuscript poems, "portraits," etc., circulating in society. The most celebrated one, perhaps it was the first to set the fashion, was the "Guirlande de Julie;" a *recueil* of sixty-two madrigals addressed to Julie d'Angennes, the beloved daughter of Mme. de Rambouillet, on her birthday in

CATHOS.

Also certain others who have been named to us as the sovereign arbiters of fine things.

MASCARILLE.

I can arrange this affair for you far better than any one. Those persons all visit me; I may say that I never rise without some half-dozen wits about me.

MADELON.

Ah, heavens! we shall be obliged to you with the utmost obligation if you will do us this kindness; for indeed we must possess the acquaintance of those gentlemen if we desire to belong to the great world. It is they who give momentum to reputations; and you know that there are some whose slightest frequentation would convey to us, if we had no other claim than that, the repute of having cultivated tastes. For myself, what I particularly value is the opportunity these intellectual visits offer for instruction in a hundred things we ought to know, because they are the very essence of

1641. It was prepared by her future husband, the Marquis de Montausier. Each madrigal is on a flower of her garland, — written by some one of the distinguished men of that day. — TR.

accomplished learning. We daily hear in that way of the latest gallantry, the pretty interchange of prose and verse. We learn to say, in timely fashion, of such a one that he has just composed the cleverest play in the world; of another that he has put words to such an air; this one wrote madrigals to some delight; that one a poem to his faithless love; a third a quatrain to his mistress, who returned an answer before eight this morning; a certain author is writing out his plot, another has reached the last part of his novel, while still a third is putting his work through the press. 'T is talk like this that gives us worth in company. If we are ignorant of such necessary things I would not give a fig for native wit.

CATHOS.

In fact, I think it goes beyond the ridiculous if those who pique themselves on mind do not know everything, even to the most trifling quatrain that comes in vogue. For my part, I should die of shame if I were asked whether I had seen some fine new thing I had not seen.

MASCARILLE.

True, it is mortifying not to possess first knowledge of all that 's going on. But do not vex yourself for that. I will establish in your

house a true academy of wits, and I promise that not a bit of verse shall be written in Paris but you shall know it all by heart before the rest of the world. For my part, I, such as you see me, I fence a little with verse myself, when the fancy takes me; and you will see, fluttering about the alcoves, two hundred little songs of my composing, and as many sonnets, four hundred epigrams, and more than a thousand madrigals, — to say nothing of portraits and enigmas.[1]

MADELON.

I own I am furiously in love with portraits; I know nothing more distinguished.

MASCARILLE.

Portraits are difficult, and require depth of mind; you will see some of my making which, I am sure, will not displease you.

[1] The *précieuse* received her company in bed in her alcove, which was elegantly decorated. These assemblies were called *ruelles* (bedsides), corresponding to the "salons" of later days. Portraits, meaning literary sketches of individuals, were much in vogue. Mlle. de Scudery's "Grand Cyrus" is a collection of the portraits of her friends. Saint-Simon, and Bruyère brought this style of portrait-painting to the level of history. Enigmas were also the fashion; the *précieuses* sent them with their invitations, and when the company assembled, they served to launch the conversation.

CATHOS.

As for me, I am terrifically fond of enigmas.

MASCARILLE.

They exercise our wit; I made four this morning, which I will let you guess.

MADELON.

Madrigals are most agreeable when they are well turned.

MASCARILLE.

That is my particular talent; I am now employed in putting the whole Roman history into madrigals.

MADELON.

Ah! truly, that will be of the highest beauty. I bespeak at least one copy when you print it.

MASCARILLE.

I will promise you each a copy, splendidly bound. That sort of thing, however, is beneath my style and condition. I do it only to oblige the publishers, who persecute me.

MADELON.

I imagine it must be a great pleasure to see one's self in print.

MASCARILLE.

No doubt it is. But, apropos, let me repeat an impromptu I made yesterday for a duchess of my acquaintance whom I was visiting; for I am devilishly strong on impromptus.

CATHOS.

An impromptu is the touchstone of the mind.

MASCARILLE.

Listen.

MADELON.

We do so, with all our ears.

MASCARILLE.

Oh, oh! oh, oh! no heed I took;
Fearing no harm, at you I look;
Your stealthy eyes rob me of joys,
Oh, thief! oh, thief! oh, thief! oh, thief!

CATHOS.

Heavens! that is gallant to the last degree.

MASCARILLE.

Yes, all that I write has a chivalrous tone; nothing pedantic about it.

MADELON.

Oh no, indeed! a thousand leagues from that.

MASCARILLE.

Did you remark the opening, "Oh, oh!"? Something, you observe, extraordinary, — "Oh, oh!" like a man who suddenly thinks of a thing, "Oh, oh!" Surprise, you see: "Oh, oh!"

MADELON.

Yes, indeed, I think that "Oh, oh!" admirable.

CATHOS.

You are right; this is the sort of thing we can never have enough of.

MADELON.

True; I would rather have written that "Oh, oh!" than an epic poem.

MASCARILLE.

Tudieu! your taste is good.

MADELON.

I think it is not altogether bad.

MASCARILLE.

But do you not also admire "No heed I took"? "No heed I took," — I did not perceive, "no heed I took," natural way of speaking. "Fearing no harm," — that is, innocently, without malice, like a poor sheep, — "at you I

look;" in other words, I amuse myself by considering you, I observe you, I contemplate you. "Your stealthy eyes;" now what do you think of that word "stealthy"? Is n't it well chosen?

CATHOS.

Altogether well.

MASCARILLE.

"Stealthy," — sly, like a cat after a mouse, *stealthy*.

MADELON.

What could be better!

MASCARILLE.

"Rob me of joys" — tear them, rend them from me, rob me. "Oh, thief! oh, thief! oh, thief! oh, thief!" Would you not suppose it was a man running and shouting after a robber: "Stop thief! stop thief! stop thief! stop thief!"?

MADELON.

You have indeed given a most witty and dashing turn to it.

MASCARILLE.

Let me sing you the air I made for it.

CATHOS.

What, have you studied music?

MASCARILLE.

I? not at all.

CATHOS.

Then how could you make the air?

MASCARILLE.

People of quality know everything though they learn nothing.

MADELON.

Why of course, my dear.

MASCARILLE.

Now tell me if my song is to your taste: Hem, hem! la, la, la, la, la. The brutality of the weather has furiously outraged the delicacies of my voice; but no matter, the tune is jaunty and cavalier (*sings*): —

Oh, oh! oh, oh! no heed I took, etc.

CATHOS.

That air is full of passion; one might indeed die of it.

MADELON.

There is something chromatic in it.

MASCARILLE.

Do you not think the thought is admirably expressed in the singing: "Oh, thief! oh, thief!

oh, thief! oh, thief!" — just as if a man were crying out with all his force, "Stop! stop! stop! stop! stop thief!" and then suddenly, all out of breath, "Stop thief!"?

MADELON.

That is indeed knowing the inner sense of things, the inmost inner! It is marvellous, I do assure you. I am enthusiastic over air and words.

CATHOS.

I have never yet known anything so strong.

MASCARILLE.

All I do comes naturally, without study.

MADELON.

Nature has treated you like a tender mother; you are truly her spoilt child.

MASCARILLE.

But you, mesdames, how do you pass your time?

CATHOS.

In doing nothing.

MADELON.

So far, we have had a most fearful dearth of amusements.

MASCARILLE.

I offer myself to take you, one of these days, if you like, to the play. They are soon to perform a new piece which I should be pleased to see in your company.

MADELON.

That is not to be refused.

MASCARILLE.

But I must ask you to applaud in good style when we get there; for I am engaged to make the piece successful; the author came this very morning to implore me. You must know it is the custom here for authors to read their plays to persons of my quality; so as to induce us to think them fine and give them reputation. I leave you to suppose whether when *we* have judged them good the people in the pit would dare to contradict us. As for me, I am most scrupulous; when I have promised a poet to support him, I shout all the time, "That is fine! that is fine!" even before the candles are lighted.

MADELON.

You do not tell me so! What an admirable place Paris is! Why, a hundred things happen

every day of which the people in the provinces know nothing, witty as they think themselves.

CATHOS.

Your request is sufficient; now that we are informed we will applaud in good style at all that is said.

MASCARILLE.

I may be mistaken, but to me you have the appearance of having written a comedy yourselves.

MADELON.

Perhaps 't is something as you say.

MASCARILLE.

Ha, faith! then I must see it. Between ourselves, I have composed a play which I intend to have performed.

CATHOS.

Indeed! to what comedians shall you intrust it?

MASCARILLE.

A fine question! Why to the comedians of the Hôtel de Bourgogne.[1] They are the only ones who are capable of bringing out the merits of a piece. The others are ignoramuses, who recite as people talk; they don't know how to

[1] The company of the Hôtel de Bourgogne and Molière's company were rivals.

roll the lines sonorously, or pause in the right places. How can the audience know which are the fine verses if the comedian does not pause, and warn us, in that way, that we ought to hurrah?

CATHOS.

'T is certainly the proper way to make an audience feel the beauties of a work. Things are worth only the value that is put upon them.

MASCARILLE.

What think you, mesdames, of my little decorations, — plumes, ribbons, lace; are they in keeping with my coat?

CATHOS.

Indeed they are.

MASCARILLE.

I think the ribbon is well chosen.

MADELON.

Prodigiously well; 't is Perdrigeon himself.[1]

MASCARILLE.

But what do you say to these ruffles at my knees?[2]

[1] Fashionable milliner of the day.

[2] These decorations, called *canon*, were a broad band of some stuff, edged with lace, tied round the leg above the knee, the lace falling half down the calf of the leg.

MADELON.

They have indeed the stylish air.

MASCARILLE.

I can boast, at least, that they are fully a quarter wider than any that have appeared so far.

MADELON.

I own to you I never saw elegance of apparel carried to such heights.

MASCARILLE.

Be pleased to apply to these gloves the reflective effort of your sense of smell.

MADELON.

Their odor is terrifically good.

CATHOS.

Never did I respire a better fragrance.

MASCARILLE, *presenting to their noses the powdered locks of his wig.*

And this?

MADELON.

'T is of the finest quality; it touches the sublime deliciously.

MASCARILLE.

But you say nothing of my feathers. How do you find them?

MADELON.

Frightfully beautiful.

MASCARILLE.

Would you believe that that one bunch cost me a louis-d'or? But I have a mania for all that is finest of its kind.

MADELON.

In that I assure you we sympathize, you and I. I have a frantic delicacy about all I wear; I cannot endure a single thing, even my stockings, if it is not made by the best workwomen.

MASCARILLE, *crying out suddenly.*

Ahi! ahi! gently! God bless me, mesdames, you are not treating me fairly. I have reason to complain of your proceedings.

CATHOS.

Why, what is it? what troubles you?

MASCARILLE.

What! two against my heart at once! To assail me right and left! Ah! that is contrary to the rights of man; the duel is not equal; I shall cry "Murder!"

CATHOS.

He says things, we must admit, in a most original way.

MADELON.

He has wonderful agility of wit.

CATHOS.

Your fears are greater than your peril; why cry out before your heart is galled?

MASCARILLE.

What the devil! it is already galled from head to foot.

SCENE ELEVENTH

CATHOS, MADELON, MASCARILLE, MAROTTE

MAROTTE.

Madame, some one asks to see you.

MADELON.

Who is it?

MAROTTE.

The Vicomte de Jodelet.

MASCARILLE.

The Vicomte de Jodelet?

MAROTTE.

Yes, monsieur.

CATHOS.

Do you know him?

MASCARILLE.

He is my best friend.

MADELON.

Let him come in at once.

MASCARILLE.

It is some time since I have seen him; I am delighted at this chance.

CATHOS.

Here he is.

SCENE TWELFTH

CATHOS, MADELON, JODELET, MASCARILLE, MAROTTE, ALMANZOR

MASCARILLE.

Ah, vicomte!

JODELET.

Ah, marquis!

MASCARILLE.

How glad I am to meet you!

JODELET.

I am delighted to find you here!

MASCARILLE.

Embrace me again, I beg of you.

MADELON, *to Cathos.*

Dearest, we are beginning to be known! see how the great world finds its way to us.

MASCARILLE.

Mesdames, allow me to present this nobleman; upon my word of honor he is worthy to be known to you.

JODELET.

I have come, mesdames, to pay the homage that is due to you. Your attractions have seignorial rights over all sorts and kinds of persons.

MADELON.

You carry your civilities to the farthest confines of flattery.

CATHOS.

This day must be inscribed in our almanac as a most fortunate one.

MADELON, *to Almanzor.*

Come, boy; must I always repeat to you the same things? Do you not see that we need a superaddition of chairs?

MASCARILLE.

You must not be surprised at the vicomte's appearance,— he is just recovering from an illness; it is that which makes his face so pale.

JODELET.

The result of keeping guard all night at court, and the fatigues of war.

MASCARILLE.

You must know, mesdames, that you behold in the Vicomte de Jodelet one of the most valiant men of this century. He is a hero of renown.

JODELET.

Marquis, you do not owe me all that praise; besides, 't is known what you can do.

MASCARILLE.

True, we have been together on occasion.

JODELET.

And in hot places.

MASCARILLE, *looking at Cathos and Madelon.*

Yes; but not so hot as this! Ha, ha, ha!

JODELET.

Our acquaintance, mesdames, began in the army; the first time that we saw each other he was commanding a regiment of cavalry in the galleys of Malta.

MASCARILLE.

That is true; but you were in the service before me: I remember that I was only a little

subaltern when you commanded two thousand horse.

JODELET.

War is a fine thing; but, upon my word, the court gives little recompense in these days to men like us who have seen much service.

MASCARILLE.

That is why I mean to hang my sword to the wall.

CATHOS.

For my part I have a furious tenderness for men of war.

MADELON.

I love them, too, but I require that mind should season bravery.

MASCARILLE.

Do you not remember, viscount, how we carried that half-moon under the guns of the enemy at the siege of Arras?

JODELET.

What do you mean with your half-moon? It was a full moon.

MASCARILLE.

I think you are right.

JODELET.

Faith! I ought to remember that! I was wounded in the leg by a hand-grenade; the marks of which I still bear. Feel the place, if you please, mesdames, and you will know what a wound it was.

CATHOS, *after touching the spot.*

Yes, it is indeed a great scar.

MASCARILLE.

Give me your hand and feel this — there, exactly at the back of my head. Have you found it?

MADELON.

Yes, I feel something.

MASCARILLE.

That 's a musket-shot which I received during my last campaign.

JODELET, *uncovering his breast.*

And here 's another, which pierced me through and through in the attack on Gravelines.

MASCARILLE, *putting his hand to the button of his trunk hose.*

I 'll show a most dreadful wound —

MADELON.

No, no; we can believe it without seeing.

MASCARILLE.

They are honorable wounds, which will prove to you what we are.

CATHOS.

We do not doubt what you say.

MASCARILLE.

Viscount, is your carriage at the door?

JODELET.

Why?

MASCARILLE.

Because we could take these ladies to drive outside the walls, and make them a present.

MADELON.

We cannot drive out to-day.

MASCARILLE.

Then let us send for violins, and have a dance.

JODELET.

Faith, yes! 't is well thought of.

MADELON.

To that we will readily consent. But we need some additions to our company.

MASCARILLE.

Holà! Champagne! Picard! Bourguignon! Cascaret! Basque! La Verdure! Lorrain! Pro-

vençal! La Violette! The devil is in those lacqueys! I think there 's not a nobleman in France worse served than I. These rascals leave me half the time alone.

MADELON.

Almanzor, tell the servants of Monsieur le marquis to fetch musicians, and do you invite the ladies and gentlemen next door to people the solitude of our ball.

MASCARILLE.

Viscount, what do you say to these eyes?

JODELET.

But you, marquis, what do *you* think of them?

MASCARILLE.

Faith! I think our freedom will have some difficulty to get away from here intact. For my part, I 'm strangely shaken; my heart is hanging by a thread.

MADELON.

How natural is all he says! He turns things so agreeably.

CATHOS.

'T is true, he makes a furious expenditure of mind.

MASCARILLE.

To show you my veracity I will now make an impromptu on the subject. (*Meditates.*)

CATHOS.

Ah! I conjure you by all the devotion of my heart, let us have something made expressly for us.

JODELET.

I feel an envious desire to do likewise; but my poetic vein is hampered just now by the quantity of blood that I have lost from repeated bleedings.

MASCARILLE.

What the devil does this mean? I always make the first verse easily, — though sometimes I have difficulty with the rest. But faith! 't is too short a time; I 'm too much hurried. I 'll make you an impromptu at my leisure and you 'll find it the very finest in the world.

JODELET.

His wit is devilish.

MADELON.

And so gallant, and well-turned!

MASCARILLE.

Viscount, tell me, how long is it since you saw the countess?

JODELET.

'T is more than three weeks since I called upon her.

MASCARILLE.

Do you know, the duke came to see me this morning, and wants to take me into the country on a deer-hunt.

MADELON.

Here come our friends.

SCENE THIRTEENTH

LUCILE, CÉLIMÈNE, CATHOS, MADELON, MASCARILLE, JODELET, MAROTTE, ALMANZOR, VIOLIN-PLAYERS

MADELON.

Ah! my dears,[1] we ask your pardon. These gentlemen have a fancy to give souls to our feet, and we have sent for you to fill the void of our assembly.

LUCILE.

You have greatly obliged us, I assure you.

[1] The word *chère* [dear] was used in those days as they used *précieuse* [precious]. The words had the same meaning and were both in vogue. *Chère*, however, expressed more personal intimacy. It has remained in use. — AIMÉ-MARTIN.

MASCARILLE.

This is but a hasty ball; one of these days we will give you another with all the forms. Have the violin-players come?

ALMANZOR.

Yes, monsieur, here they are.

CATHOS.

Come, my dears, let us take our places.

MASCARILLE, *dancing alone by way of prelude.*

La, la, la; la, la, la; la, la.

MADELON.

What an elegant figure he has!

CATHOS.

And how well he dances!

MASCARILLE, *taking Madelon for a partner.*

My freedom will dance a *courante* [1] as well as my legs. Keep time, violins, keep time! Oh, what ignoramuses! It is n't possible to dance to them. The devil take you, can't you play in time? La, la, la; la, la, la; la, la. Steady, Oh! you village fiddlers.

[1] An old-fashioned and very grave dance. — LITTRÉ.

JODELET, *dancing also.*

Holà! don't hurry the time so fast; I 'm just over an illness.

SCENE FOURTEENTH

DU CROISY, LAGRANGE, CATHOS, MADELON, LUCILE, CÉLIMÈNE, JODELET, MASCARILLE, MAROTTE, VIOLIN-PLAYERS

LAGRANGE, *a stick in his hand.*

Ha, ha! rascals, what are you doing here? We have been searching for you these three hours.

MASCARILLE, *feeling himself beaten.*

Ahi! ahi! ahi! You did n't tell me about the blows.

JODELET.

Ahi! ahi! ahi!

LAGRANGE.

A fine thing indeed, scamps that you are, to try to play the man of quality!

DU CROISY.

This will teach you to know your places.

SCENE FIFTEENTH

Cathos, Madelon, Lucile, Célimène, Mascarille, Jodelet, Marotte, Violin-players

Madelon.

What does all this mean?

Jodelet.

'T is a wager.

Cathos.

What! you let yourselves be beaten for a wager?

Mascarille.

Oh! I did not wish to take notice of it; I am a violent man, and I might have been too angry.

Madelon.

But to endure such an affront in our presence!

Mascarille.

Oh! it is nothing at all. Let us go on with our dance. We have known those men a long time, and it is not worth while between friends to get angry for such a trifle.

SCENE SIXTEENTH

DU CROISY, LAGRANGE, MADELON, CATHOS, LUCILE, CÉLIMÈNE, MASCARILLE, JODELET, MAROTTE, VIOLIN-PLAYERS

LAGRANGE.

Faith, you rascals! you shall not laugh at us ain, I promise you. Come in, you men.

(*Three or four fighting-men enter.*)

MADELON.

What means this audacity? How dare you disturb our house in this way?

DU CROISY.

Ha! mesdames; do you think we will allow our lacqueys to be better received here than ourselves? Shall they make love to you and give you a ball at our expense?

MADELON.

Your lacqueys!

LAGRANGE.

Yes, our lacqueys; and it is neither right nor honorable in you to debauch them as you are doing.

MADELON.

Oh, heavens! what insolence!

LAGRANGE.

But they shall not have the advantage of our clothes to find favor in your sight. If you must love them it shall be for their fine eyes only. Quick! take off those borrowed plumes at once.

JODELET.

Farewell to our finery!

MASCARILLE.

Down with the marquisate and the viscounty!

DU CROISY.

Ha, ha! you rogues; so you had the audacity to follow in our tracks! You must find some other way to be agreeable to your dames, I tell you that.

LAGRANGE.

'T was too audacious to supplant us, and supplant us too in our own clothes.

MASCARILLE.

O fortune! what is thy inconstancy!

DU CROISY.

Quick! off with everything.

LAGRANGE.

Yes, off with all, and make haste about it. Now, mesdames, in the state in which you see them, you may continue your amours as long as you please. We leave you every sort of freedom for that, and we declare, monsieur and I, that we shall not, in any way, be jealous.

SCENE SEVENTEENTH

MADELON, CATHOS, JODELET, MASCARILLE, VIOLIN-PLAYERS

CATHOS.

What disgrace!

MADELON.

I shall die of rage!

VIOLIN-PLAYER, *to Mascarille.*

What does this mean? and who is to pay us?

MASCARILLE.

Ask the viscount.

VIOLIN-PLAYER, *to Jodelet.*

Who will give us the money?

JODELET.

Ask the marquis.

SCENE EIGHTEENTH

Gorgibus, Madelon, Cathos, Jodelet, Mascarille, Violin-players

Gorgibus.

Ha! you jades, you 've got yourselves into a fine pickle! I have just heard of your doings from those gentlemen who have left my house.

Madelon.

Oh, father! they have played us such an infamous trick.

Gorgibus.

Yes, it was infamous, but it was caused by your insolence, you hussies. They resented the treatment you gave them, and I, unlucky man that I am, have to swallow the affront.

Madelon.

Ah! but I swear to be avenged, or I 'll die in the attempt. And you, villains, how dare you stay here after such insolence?

Mascarille.

To treat a marquis in that way! Behold what the world is! — the slightest mishap makes those who cherish us despise us. Come comrade, let us seek fortune elsewhere. I see plainly that vain appearances are all they care for here; bare virtue has no chance. (*Exit.*)

SCENE NINETEENTH

GORGIBUS, MADELON, CATHOS, VIOLIN-PLAYERS

VIOLIN-PLAYER.

Monsieur, we expect you to pay us, in default of the others, for the music we have made here.

GORGIBUS, *striking them.*

Yes, yes, I 'll pay you; and that 's the money I 'll do it in. As for you, you jades, I don't know what keeps me from doing the same to you. We shall be the by-word and the laughing-stock of every one; and that 's what you have brought upon us by your foolish nonsense. Go, hide your heads, you wretched girls; go, hide forever. (*Alone*) And as for you who caused their folly, contemptible trash, pernicious amusements of idle minds, novels, songs, verses, sonnets, and rhymes, — be off with you to all the devils!

END OF LES PRÉCIEUSES RIDICULES.

GEORGE DANDIN

Comedy

IN THREE ACTS

PERSONAGES

GEORGE DANDIN[1] . .	*Rich peasant, husband of Angelique.*
ANGÉLIQUE	*Wife of George Dandin and daughter of M. de Sotenville.*
MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE	*Country gentleman.*
MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.	
CLITANDRE	*Lover of Angélique.*
CLAUDINE	*Maid to Angélique.*
LUBIN	*Peasant employed by Clitandre.*
COLIN	*Valet to George Dandin.*

The scene is in front of the house of George Dandin, in the country.

[1] "Dandin" means *ninny*. Rabelais was the first to use the word as a proper name.

GEORGE DANDIN

Act First

SCENE FIRST

GEORGE DANDIN, *alone.*

AH! what a strange thing it is to have a lady for your wife! and what a warning my marriage should be to all peasants who want to rise above their state of life and ally themselves, as I've done, with a nobleman's family. Nobility is, in itself, a very good thing; it is a considerable thing, that's very certain; but it is accompanied by so many unpleasant circumstances that 't is best not to rub shoulders with it. I have grown wise in the matter at my own expense. I know what nobles are when they take us peasants into their family; the wedlock is mighty little with our persons, it is our property they marry. I'd have done much better, rich as I am, to mate

among the good, hearty peasantry, instead of taking a wife who holds herself above me, shows disgust at having to bear my name, and thinks that with all my wealth I have n't bought the title of her husband. George Dandin! George Dandin! you 've done a foolish thing, the most foolish thing that ever was done. My house is horrid to me now. I never enter it without finding some fresh trouble.

SCENE SECOND

George Dandin, Lubin

George Dandin, *seeing Lubin in the act of leaving the house.*

What the devil is that queer fellow doing in my house?

Lubin, *perceiving George Dandin.*

There 's a man looking at me.

George Dandin, *aside.*

He does n't know me.

Lubin, *aside.*

He must suspect something.

George Dandin, *aside.*

Ha! he does n't even salute me.

LUBIN, *aside.*

I 'm afraid he 'll go and tell that he saw me coming out.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Good-day.

LUBIN.

Your servant.

GEORGE DANDIN.

You don't belong in these parts, I think?

LUBIN.

No; I 've come over just to see the festival to-morrow.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Ah, indeed! Tell me, please, did n't you come out of that house just now?

LUBIN.

Hush!

GEORGE DANDIN.

Why?

LUBIN.

Peace!

GEORGE DANDIN.

What for?

LUBIN.

Silence! you must n't say one word about seeing me come out of that house.

George Dandin.

Why not?

Lubin.

Goodness! because —

George Dandin.

Because why?

Lubin.

Softly; I am afraid somebody may hear us.

George Dandin.

No, there is no one near.

Lubin.

Well, you see I've been speaking to the mistress of the house, about a message from a certain gentleman who is making eyes at her; and nobody must know about it. Do you understand?

George Dandin.

Yes.

Lubin.

That's the reason I don't want to be overheard. They told me to take the greatest care that no one saw me; I beg of you not to say you've seen me.

George Dandin.

I'll take care of that.

Lubin.

I am so glad I 've done the thing secretly, just as they told me.

George Dandin.

Yes, you have done well.

Lubin.

The husband, they tell me, is so jealous he won't let any one make love to his wife; he 'd raise the deuce if it got to his ears. Do you understand?

George Dandin.

Perfectly.

Lubin.

He must n't know anything about it.

George Dandin.

Of course not.

Lubin.

They want to deceive him quietly. You understand?

George Dandin.

Thoroughly.

Lubin.

Now if you go and say you 've seen me coming out of his house, you 'll spoil the whole affair. You understand?

GEORGE DANDIN.

Of course I do. What is the name of the man who sent you?

LUBIN.

He is a nobleman of our parts. Monsieur le Vicomte de — something — Hang it! I can't remember how the devil they jabber those names. Monsieur Cli — Clitandre.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Is it that young fellow who lives —

LUBIN.

Yes; over there among the trees.

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

That 's why the young spark has come to live in my neighborhood. I nosed him at once; I thought there was something suspicious in his being here.

LUBIN.

I tell you he 's the best man that ever you saw. He gave me three gold pieces just to come here and tell the wife he is in love with her and asks the honor of coming to see her. Good pay for little work. What 's a whole day's labor, for which I only earn ten sous, compared with that?

George Dandin.

Well, did you give the message?

Lubin.

Yes, I found the maid, a certain Claudine, who saw what I wanted at the first go-off, and let me speak to her mistress.

George Dandin, *aside.*

Ha! that slut of a maid!

Lubin.

Whew! but Claudine is pretty! She won me directly, and it only depends on her whether I marry her.

George Dandin.

What answer did the mistress make to the courtier gentleman?

Lubin.

She told me to tell him — wait, I don't know if I can remember it all, — she said she was very much obliged for the affection he had for her, but because of her husband, who is queer, he must be careful not to let it be known, and they must invent some way to be able to see each other secretly.

George Dandin, *aside.*

Ha! that jade of a wife!

LUBIN.

Gracious! it will be droll; for the husband has n't a notion of the plot, that 's one comfort; and they 'll flout his jealousy finely, won't they?

GEORGE DANDIN.

No doubt.

LUBIN.

Well, good-day to you. Keep your mouth shut, anyhow, so that the husband sha'n't hear a word of it.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes, yes.

LUBIN.

As for me, I shall pretend to know nothing. I 'm a sly dog; nobody will ever find out I 'm in it.

SCENE THIRD

GEORGE DANDIN, *alone.*

Well, George Dandin! now you see the way your wife means to treat you. This is what comes of wishing to marry a lady. You are expected to put up with everything and have no chance to revenge yourself; the nobility just holds you down, bound hand and foot. Equality of station, in marriage at least, leaves a man at liberty to resent his wrongs, and if your wife is

only a peasant you have got your elbows free to lay it on as you like. But you would hanker after the nobility; you were n't satisfied to be master in your own house. Ha! I am furious in my inmost heart; I 'd willingly take a stick and beat myself. What! listen impudently to the love of that young fop, and promise him a return for it! *Morbleu!* I won't let this occasion pass. I 'll go at once and lay my complaint before her father and mother, and make them witnesses, as far as needful, of the grounds of grief and resentment their daughter gives me. But here they come, — in the nick of time.

SCENE FOURTH

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE, MADAME DE SOTENVILLE, GEORGE DANDIN

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

What is the matter, son-in-law; you seem troubled.

GEORGE DANDIN.

I have reason to be, and —

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Upon my word, son-in-law, you have little civility; you ought to bow to persons when you meet them.

George Dandin.

Faith! mother-in-law, I have other things in my head, and —

Madame de Sotenville.

Again! Is it possible that you know your company so little? Is there no way of teaching you how to conduct yourself toward persons of quality?

George Dandin.

What is it now?

Madame de Sotenville.

When will you relinquish, toward me, the familiarity of that word "mother-in-law"? Can you not accustom yourself to say "madame"?

George Dandin.

Parbleu! if you call me "son-in-law" it seems to me that I can call you "mother-in-law."

Madame de Sotenville.

There are many reasons against it. Things are not equal. Learn, if you please, that it is not your place to use that word to a person of my station. Son-in-law as you are, there is a great difference between us; and you ought to understand it better than you do.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

That is enough, my love; we will drop the subject.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Good heavens, Monsieur de Sotenville! you show an indulgence which is exclusively yours; and you never know how to make others pay you the respect that is your due.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Corbleu! I beg your pardon there; no one can teach me anything as to that. I have shown in the course of my life, by a score of vigorous actions, that I am not a man to lower one inch of my pretensions. But it is enough to give him a slight warning. Now tell me, son-in-law, what you have upon your mind.

GEORGE DANDIN.

If I am to answer categorically, I must tell you, Monsieur de Sotenville, that I have reason to —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Gently, son-in-law; you must learn that it is not respectful to call persons by their names, and that it is proper to say to those above us "monsieur" simply.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Very well, then, monsieur simply, and not Monsieur de Sotenville, I have to tell you that my wife gives me —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Not so fast! remember that you ought not to say "my wife" when you speak of our daughter.

GEORGE DANDIN.

What! my wife is not my wife?

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Yes, son-in-law, she is your wife; but it is not permissible that you should call her so; you could not do otherwise if you had married one of your equals.

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

Ah! George Dandin, where have you been and poked yourself? (*Aloud*) Hey! for goodness' sake lay aside your gentility for a time and let me speak as I can. (*Aside*) The devil take the tyranny of their manners! (*To Monsieur de Sotenville*) I now tell you that I am not satisfied with my marriage.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

And for what reason, son-in-law?

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

What! is this the way you speak of a thing from which you have derived such great advantages?

GEORGE DANDIN.

What advantages, madame — since madame it is? The marriage has n't been a bad one for you. Without me your affairs, if you will allow me to say so, would have been in a very dilapidated condition; my money has mended a good many big holes. But as for myself, I would like you to tell me in what way I have profited, — unless it is by lengthening my name and, instead of George Dandin, being called, by you, Monsieur de la Dandinière.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Do you count as nothing, son-in-law, the advantage of being allied to the house of de Sotenville?

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

And to that of La Prudoterie, from which I have had the honor to descend? — a house whose issue in the female line transmits nobility; a fine privilege, by means of which your children will be noble.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes, that 's all very well; my children will be noble, but I shall be a laughing-stock if matters are not set right.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

What do you mean by that, son-in-law?

GEORGE DANDIN.

I mean that your daughter does not live as a woman should live; and she does things that are against her honor.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Stop; take care what you say. My daughter comes of too virtuous a race ever to do anything to wound her honor. For the last three hundred years there has never been known in the house of La Prudoterie a single woman, thank God, who gave cause to be talked about.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Corbleu! the house of de Sotenville has never, in its whole line, had a worthless woman; bravery is not more hereditary in its males than chastity in its females.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

We had a Jacqueline de la Prudoterie who would never consent to be the mistress of a duke and peer, the governor of our province.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

And in our family we had a Mathurine de Sotenville who refused twenty thousand crowns from a favorite of the king, who only asked to speak with her.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Well, your daughter is not so particular as all that, and she has tamed down since she came to live with me.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Explain yourself, son-in-law. We are not persons to support her in any wrong-doing; we should be the first, her mother and I, to see justice done to you.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

We allow no trifling with matters of honor; we have brought her up in the strictest virtue.

GEORGE DANDIN.

All that I can tell you is that there 's a certain courtier, whom you have seen, who is in

love with her under my very nose; he is making her professions of love, to which she listens willingly.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Good God! I would strangle her with my own hands if she disgraced the virtue of her mother.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Corbleu! I 'll run her through with my sword, both her and her lover, if she has sinned against her honor.

GEORGE DANDIN.

I have told you what is going on in order to make my complaint; I now ask you to do justice in the matter.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Do not be uneasy as to that. I will do justice to both of you. I am a man to drive this matter home to any one, no matter who it is. But are you quite sure of what you say?

GEORGE DANDIN.

Quite sure.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

At any rate, be careful; between noblemen these are ticklish matters to deal with; it will not do to make any blunder here.

GEORGE DANDIN.

I have told you nothing that is not strictly true.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE, *to Madame de Sotenville.*

My love, go in and speak to your daughter, while my son-in-law and I will go in search of the man.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Can it be that my daughter has forgotten herself in this way after the virtuous example which, as you know yourself, I have set her?

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

We will clear this matter up. Follow me, son-in-law, and do not feel anxious. You shall see of what stuff we are made when others attack or injure those who belong to us.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Here comes the man himself.

SCENE FIFTH

Monsieur de Sotenville, Clitandre, George Dandin

Monsieur de Sotenville.

Monsieur, do you know me?

Clitandre.

No, not that I am aware of, monsieur.

Monsieur de Sotenville.

I am the Baron de Sotenville.

Clitandre.

I am rejoiced to hear it.

Monsieur de Sotenville.

My name is known at court; I had the honor, in my youth, to be the first to answer the king's summons at Nancy.

Clitandre.

That was well done!

Monsieur de Sotenville.

My honored father, Jean-Gilles de Sotenville had the glory of assisting in person at the great siege of Montauban.

CLITANDRE.

Delighted to hear it.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

And I had an ancestor, Bertrand de Sotenville, who was so respected in his day that he received permission to sell his property and go to foreign parts.

CLITANDRE.

I can readily believe it.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

It has been reported to me, monsieur, that you love and are pursuing a young person who is my daughter, in whom I take an interest, as I also do in this man you see here (*motioning to George Dandin*), who has the honor to be my son-in-law.

CLITANDRE.

Who? I pursuing your daughter?

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Yes; and I am glad to meet you, in order to obtain from you, if you please, an explanation of the matter.

CLITANDRE.

This is a very strange slander! Who told you, monsieur?

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Some one who thinks that he is sure of it.

CLITANDRE.

Then that some one has lied. I am an honest man. Do you think me capable, monsieur, of so base an action? I! love a young and handsome woman who has the honor to be the daughter of Monsieur le Baron de Sotenville? I respect you too much, I am too truly your obedient servant for that. Whoever told you this thing is a fool —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Now, son-in-law.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Now what?

CLITANDRE.

— and a rascal and a liar.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE, *to George Dandin.*

Answer! answer!

GEORGE DANDIN.

Answer yourself.

CLITANDRE.

If I knew who it was I 'd give him, in your presence, a sword-thrust through the body.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE, *to George Dandin.*

But you must support the charge.

GEORGE DANDIN.

It is supported well enough; it is true.

CLITANDRE.

Can it be your son-in-law, monsieur, who —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Yes; he has complained to me.

CLITANDRE.

He may thank the advantage that he has in belonging to you; otherwise I would teach him to say such things about a man of my quality.

SCENE SIXTH

MONSIEUR AND MADAME DE SOTENVILLE, ANGÉLIQUE, CLITANDRE, GEORGE DANDIN, CLAUDINE

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Jealousy is truly a strange thing! I bring my daughter here to explain this matter in presence of every one.

CLITANDRE, *to Angélique.*

Can it be you, madame, who have told your husband that I am in love with you?

ANGÉLIQUE.

I? how could I have told him such a thing? Is it so? I should like to see you in love with me! Venture to be, if you please, and you will soon find out to whom you address yourself. I advise you to make the attempt! Have recourse to the tricks of love; send me emissaries, write me billets-doux, watch for the hours when my husband is absent, or the hours when I take my walk, and then speak to me of love; you have only to do that, and I promise you shall be received in a suitable manner!

CLITANDRE.

Hey! la, la, madame; gently, if you please. There 's no cause for you to read me lessons, or to be so scandalized. Who told you that I ever dreamed of loving you?

ANGÉLIQUE.

I know nothing but what they tell me here.

CLITANDRE.

They may say what they please; but you know whether I have spoken to you of love when we have chanced to meet.

ANGÉLIQUE.

If you had done so you would have had your proper answer.

CLITANDRE.

I assure you you have nothing to fear from me. I am not a man to cause unhappiness to lovely woman. I respect you and your parents too much to have the slightest thought of being in love with you.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE, *to George Dandin.*

There! you see.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Now you are satisfied, son-in-law. What do do you say to that?

GEORGE DANDIN.

I say they are pulling wool over your eyes. I know what I know. To speak plainly, I know she received a message from him just now.

ANGÉLIQUE.

I! I received a message?

CLITANDRE.

I? I sent a message?

ANGÉLIQUE.

Claudine!

CLITANDRE, *to Claudine.*

Is that true?

CLAUDINE.

No; it is the strangest falsehood.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Hold your tongue, you jade; I know what you've been about; it was you who took the messenger to your mistress.

CLAUDINE.

I?

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes, you; don't play the prim here.

CLAUDINE.

Alas! the world is full of wickedness in these days. To go and suspect me like that! — me who am innocence itself!

GEORGE DANDIN.

Hold your tongue, you hussy. I've known you a good long time; you play the demure, but you're a sly one.

CLAUDINE, *to Angélique.*

Madame, is it —

GEORGE DANDIN.

Hold your tongue, I say; you'll pay dear for the folly of others, for you have no nobleman-father to appeal to.

ANGÉLIQUE.

This falsehood is so great, it touches me so cruelly to the heart that I have no strength to repel it. It is horrible indeed to be accused by a husband when I do nothing but my duty. Alas! if I am blamable for anything it is that I have been too kind to him.

CLAUDINE.

That is true!

ANGÉLIQUE.

My misfortune is that I consider him too much. Would to Heaven that I were capable of receiving, as he says, the attentions of a lover; my fate would be less pitiable. Adieu; I must withdraw; I cannot endure to be insulted thus.

SCENE SEVENTH

MONSIEUR AND MADAME DE SOTENVILLE, CLITANDRE, GEORGE DANDIN, CLAUDINE

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE, *to George Dandin.*

You do not deserve the virtuous wife that has been given to you.

CLAUDINE.

Faith! he deserves to have his charges true; if I were in her place, I would not spare him.

(*To Clitandre*) Yes, monsieur, you ought to make love to my mistress to punish him. Go on, and do it; it is I who tell you so; your time would be well employed, and you can count on me to serve you, since I am already accused of it. (*Exit.*)

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Son-in-law, you deserve to have these things said of you. Your behavior must turn every one against you.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Go; learn how to treat a well-born woman; take care, in future, to make no more such blunders.

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

It makes me savage to seem wrong when I am right.

SCENE EIGHTH

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE, CLITANDRE, GEORGE DANDIN

CLITANDRE, *to Monsieur de Sotenville.*

Monsieur, you have heard me falsely accused; you are a man who knows the rules on a point of honor. I now demand of you satisfaction for the affront that has been offered to me.

Monsieur de Sotenville.

It is a just demand, and according to the order of proceeding. Come, son-in-law, give monsieur satisfaction.

George Dandin.

Satisfaction?

Monsieur de Sotenville.

Yes; as the rules require when false charges have been made.

George Dandin.

That's a thing I don't agree to; I have not made false charges; I know what I think about it.

Monsieur de Sotenville.

No matter what you think, he has denied the charge; that is satisfactory; no one has the right to complain of a man who denies the fact.

George Dandin.

So, if I find him in my wife's bedroom am I to let him off if he denies being there?

Monsieur de Sotenville.

Come, no arguments. Make him your excuses.

George Dandin.

I! make him excuses, when —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Come, I say; you have no choice. You need not fear that you may go too far, for I will tell you what to say.

GEORGE DANDIN.

I cannot —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Corbleu! son-in-law, don't stir my bile, or I shall be on his side, not on yours. Come, let yourself be ruled by me.

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

Ah! George Dandin!

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

First, your hat in hand; monsieur is a nobleman, and you are not.

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside, hat in hand.*

I 'm furious!

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Repeat after me: Monsieur —

GEORGE DANDIN.

Monsieur —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

I ask your pardon — (*Seeing that George Dandin hesitates to obey*) Ah!

GEORGE DANDIN.

I ask your pardon —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

For the ill thoughts I had of you.

GEORGE DANDIN.

For the ill thoughts I had of you.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

I did not then have the honor of knowing you —

GEORGE DANDIN.

I did not then have the honor of knowing you —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

And I beg you to believe —

GEORGE DANDIN.

And I beg you to believe —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

That I am your servant —

GEORGE DANDIN.

Do you expect me to be the servant of a man who is my wife's lover?

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE, *threatening him.*

Ah!

CLITANDRE.

That is sufficient, monsieur.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

No; I insist that he shall finish. The thing must be done in due form. (*To George Dandin*) Go on: That I am your servant —

GEORGE DANDIN.

That I am your servant.

CLITANDRE.

Monsieur, I am yours with all my heart. I shall not think again of what has happened. (*To Monsieur de Sotenville*) As for you, monsieur, I bid you good-day, and I am sorry for the little annoyance to which you have been subjected.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

I kiss your hands; and I shall be most happy, when it pleases you, to have you course with me.

CLITANDRE.

You are too kind. (*Exit.*)

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Now, son-in-law, that is how an affair should be carried on. Adieu; remember that you have entered a family which will always stand by you, and will never allow any one to insult you.

SCENE NINTH

GEORGE DANDIN, *alone.*

Ah! how I — You would have it, you would have it, George Dandin, ninny, you would have it! and now you 've got it, it suits you finely! A pretty pass you 've brought yourself to! — and it is just what you deserve. But the thing is now to undeceive the father and mother; there must be some way to manage that.

END OF ACT FIRST.

Act Second

SCENE FIRST

CLAUDINE, LUBIN

CLAUDINE.

YES, I guessed it came from you; I was certain you told some one who repeated it to our master.

LUBIN.

Faith, I only said a bit of word to a man, passing like, so as he might n't tell any one he had seen me coming out; folks must be great gabblers in these parts.

CLAUDINE.

Upon my word, this Monsieur le vicomte is mighty careful in choosing his people when he takes you for an ambassador! He picked up a crooked stick in you, faith!

LUBIN.

Pshaw! I 'll be sharper next time; I 'll take better care of myself.

CLAUDINE.

Next time, indeed!

LUBIN.

Don't talk any more about it. Listen.

CLAUDINE.

What am I to listen to?

LUBIN.

Turn your face round to me a little.

CLAUDINE.

Well, what is it?

LUBIN.

Claudine!

CLAUDINE.

What?

LUBIN.

Hey! la, la, don't you know what I want to say?

CLAUDINE.

No.

LUBIN.

Thunder! I love you.

CLAUDINE.

Really and truly?

LUBIN.

Yes, the devil take me! and you may know I love you when I swear it.

CLAUDINE.

Very well, then.

LUBIN.

I feel my heart wobbling when I look at you.

CLAUDINE.

I 'm glad of that.

LUBIN.

How is it you manage to be so pretty?

CLAUDINE.

I do as others do.

LUBIN.

Look here; it does n't take such a lot of butter to make a pound; if you are willing, you shall be my wife and I 'll be your husband, and we 'll both be husband and wife.

CLAUDINE.

Perhaps you 'll be as jealous as the master.

LUBIN.

No, I won't.

CLAUDINE.

As for me, I hate suspicious husbands. I want one who is n't scared by anything; one who has such confidence in my virtue that he could see me in the midst of thirty men and not be uneasy.

LUBIN.

Well, I 'll be like that.

CLAUDINE.

It is the silliest thing in the world to distrust a woman and torment her. The truth of the matter is, men never gain anything by it; they put evil into our heads, and it often happens that husbands, by making such a fuss, bring the thing about themselves.

LUBIN.

Well, I 'll give you liberty to do exactly what you like.

CLAUDINE.

That 's how men ought to do if they don't want to be deceived. When a husband puts himself at our discretion we only take as much liberty as is proper. So it is with husbands who open their purses and say: Take all you want. Then we treat them fairly, and content ourselves in a reasonable way. But those who wrangle about it — why, we are forced to shear them; such husbands as that we never spare.

LUBIN.

Now, see; I 'll be one of those to open my purse, if you 'll only marry me.

CLAUDINE.

Well, well, we 'll see about it.

LUBIN.

Come here, Claudine.

CLAUDINE.

What do you want?

LUBIN.

Come here, I say.

CLAUDINE.

Ah, gently; I don't like pawing.

LUBIN.

Hey! but just a little scrap of love.

CLAUDINE.

Let me alone, I tell you. I don't allow such foolery.

LUBIN.

Claudine!

CLAUDINE, *pushing him away.*

Hi!

LUBIN.

How rude you are to a poor fellow! Fie! it is n't nice to push people that way! Are not you ashamed to be so handsome and not let any one make love to you? Hey! la, la.

CLAUDINE.

I'll hit your nose.

LUBIN.

Oh! the savage! the surly thing! Fie! pah! you cruel minx!

CLAUDINE.

You take liberties.

LUBIN.

Now what would it cost you to be kind?

CLAUDINE.

You should have patience.

LUBIN.

But only one little kiss; we can charge it to the marriage.

CLAUDINE.

No, I beg to be excused.

LUBIN.

But, Claudine, do please; give it me on account.

CLAUDINE.

Hey! no, no; I've been caught that way before. Adieu; be off, and tell Monsieur le vicomte that I 'll be sure to deliver his note.

LUBIN.

Adieu, you hard donkey-driver!

CLAUDINE.

That 's a pretty speech for a lover.

LUBIN.

Adieu, rock, pebble, granite, all that 's hardest on this earth.

CLAUDINE, *alone.*

I 'll carry the note to my mistress at once — no, here she comes with her husband; I 'll step aside and wait till she 's alone.

SCENE SECOND

GEORGE DANDIN, ANGÉLIQUE

GEORGE DANDIN.

No, no; I 'm not to be deceived so easily, and I 'm only too certain that the tale told to me was true. I have better eyes than you think for; and that fine talk of yours just now did n't hoodwink me.

SCENE THIRD

Clitandre, Angélique, George Dandin

Clitandre, *aside, at the back of the stage.*

Ah! here she is; but the husband is with her.

George Dandin, *not seeing Clitandre.*

Through all your lying pretences, I see the truth of what has been told to me, and the little respect you feel for the marriage bond between us. (*Clitandre and Angélique bow to each other.*) Good heavens! leave off bowing; that 's not the sort of respect I want, and you are only doing it in derision.

Angélique.

I! in derision? not I!

George Dandin.

I know your meaning, and I know too — (*Clitandre and Angélique bow again.*) Again! Ha! stop this mockery! I am aware that on account of your nobility you consider me far beneath you, and the respect I am talking about does not concern me personally; I am speaking of the respect you owe to bonds as venerable as those of marriage. (*Angélique makes a sign*

to Clitandre.) Oh! you need n't shrug your shoulders; I 'm not saying silly things.

Angélique.

Who shrugged their shoulders?

George Dandin.

Good powers! can't I see plainly? I tell you once more, marriage is a chain which we must bear with respect; and you do a very wrong thing to treat me as you do. (*Angélique makes a sign with her head to Clitandre.*) Yes, I say a very wrong thing, and you need not shake your head and make faces at me.

Angélique.

I? I am sure I don't know what you mean.

George Dandin.

I know very well myself; your contemptuous ways are nothing new to me. Though I was not born noble I come of a race which is above reproach, and the family of the Dandins —

Clitandre, *behind Angélique, and not seen by George Dandin.*

One moment's interview.

George Dandin, *not seeing Clitandre.*

Hey?

ANGÉLIQUE.

What? I did not say anything.

George Dandin walks round his wife, and Clitandre retires, making a profound bow to George Dandin.

SCENE FOURTH

GEORGE DANDIN, ANGÉLIQUE

GEORGE DANDIN.

There he is now, hovering round you.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Well, is that my fault? Do you expect me to prevent it?

GEORGE DANDIN.

I expect you to do what a woman should to please her husband. No matter what people say, lovers do not beset women unless they are encouraged. There 's a certain soft air which attracts them, just as honey attracts flies; but virtuous women have manners which drive them off at once.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Drive them off! and pray, why should I? I am not offended because they think me handsome; it gives me pleasure.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes; but what part do you expect a husband to play while such gallantry is going on?

ANGÉLIQUE.

The part of a decent man, who is glad to see his wife admired.

GEORGE DANDIN.

I beg to be excused; I have no such intention. The Dandins are not accustomed to that style of thing.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Oh! the Dandins can get accustomed to it if they choose. As for me, I declare to you my intention of not renouncing the world and burying myself alive with a husband. What! because a man chooses to marry us, must we give up everything, and break off all intercourse with the living? What an amazing thing the tyranny of husbands is! They are mighty good to wish us to be dead to pleasure and live only for them! I scoff at all that; and I don't mean to die so young.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Is that how you fulfil the solemn promises you made to me publicly?

ANGÉLIQUE.

I did not make them of my own accord; you dragged them from me. Did you, before our marriage, ask my consent and whether I was willing to have you? You consulted no one but my father and mother; it was they whom you married, and you had better complain to them of the wrongs that may be done you. For my part, I never told you I would marry you; you took me without consulting my feelings, and I do not consider myself bound to submit, like a slave, to your will. I wish, if you please, to enjoy my share of youth's best years, and take all the liberty my age confers. I mean to see a little of the world and taste the pleasure of hearing sweet things said to me. You must make up your mind to it, by way of punishment, and you may thank Heaven that I am not capable of doing something worse.

GEORGE DANDIN.

So! that is how you take it? I am your husband, and I tell you I shall not allow it.

ANGÉLIQUE.

I am your wife, and I tell you that that is how I shall conduct myself.

George Dandin, *aside.*

I am seized with a desire to make a jelly of her face and put it, for the rest of her life, out of a condition to please that philanderer. Ah! George Dandin, you can't control yourself, and you 'd better get out of here at once.

SCENE FIFTH

Angélique, Claudine

Claudine.

I have been all impatience to have him go, madame, that I might give you this note from you know who.

Angélique.

Give it. (*Reads to herself.*)

Claudine, *aside.*

As far as I can see, what he writes is not displeasing.

Angélique.

Ah ! Claudine, this note is written in a most gallant style. How agreeable men about the court can be, both in manners and address. Compared with them, what are these provincials!

CLAUDINE.

For my part, I think the Dandins, now you know them well, don't please you much.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Wait here; I must write an answer to the note.

CLAUDINE, *alone.*

I did n't need to advise him to push on and make himself agreeable!

SCENE SIXTH

CLITANDRE, LUBIN, CLAUDINE

CLAUDINE.

Really, monsieur, you chose a most intelligent messenger.

CLITANDRE.

I could not send a servant of my own. But, my poor Claudine, I must reward you for all the good services I know you have done me. (*Feels in his pocket.*)

CLAUDINE.

Hey! monsieur; that 's not necessary. No, monsieur, no; don't give yourself that trouble. I do you these services because you deserve them, and I feel in my heart an inclination to oblige you.

CLITANDRE, *giving her money.*

You have obliged me very much.

LUBIN, *to Claudine.*

As we are going to be married, give that to me, and I 'll put it with my money.

CLAUDINE.

No, I 'll keep it — and the kiss, too.

CLITANDRE, *to Claudine.*

Tell me, have you given my note to your beautiful mistress?

CLAUDINE.

Yes. She has gone to write the answer.

CLITANDRE.

But, Claudine, is there no way by which I can have an interview?

CLAUDINE.

Yes, come with me; I 'll take you to her.

CLITANDRE.

Will she approve? Is there no risk?

CLAUDINE.

No, no; her husband is not at home; besides, it is not he she is cautious about. She dreads her father and mother; as long as they think it is all right there 's nothing to fear.

CLITANDRE.

I resign myself to your guidance.

LUBIN, *alone.*

Thunder and lightening! what a clever wife I 'm going to have! She has wits enough for four.

SCENE SEVEN

GEORGE DANDIN, LUBIN

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

Here 's the same man again. Please God I may induce him to give testimony to the father and mother about this thing they won't believe.

LUBIN.

Ha! so here you are, Mr. Gabbler! — you whom I so particularly charged to say nothing and who promised me faithfully not to. You are a gossip and go about repeating what folks say to you in secret.

GEORGE DANDIN.

I?

LUBIN.

Yes; you went and told the husband what I told you; and you are the cause of all this up-

roar. I 'm very glad to know what a tongue you 've got; it warns me not to tell you anything more.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Listen to me, friend.

LUBIN.

If you weren't such a babbler I 'd tell you what is going on now; but, just to punish you, you sha'n't know anything about it.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Going on! what is going on?

LUBIN.

Nothing, nothing. You see what it is to gabble; you can't get another word out of me; I 'll keep that tit-bit of news to myself.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Here, stop a minute.

LUBIN.

No, no.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Stop, I only want to say a word.

LUBIN.

Not I; you want to worm it out of me.

GEORGE DANDIN.

That is n't it.

LUBIN.

Hey! not such a fool as you think me! I see what you are after.

GEORGE DANDIN.

It is something quite different. Listen to me.

LUBIN.

I know better. You want me to tell you that Monsieur le viscomte paid Claudine some money and she has taken him in to her mistress; but I 'm not quite such a ninny as that.

GEORGE DANDIN.

For Heaven's sake —

LUBIN.

No.

GEORGE DANDIN.

I 'll give you —

LUBIN, *departing.*

Tarara!

SCENE EIGHTH

GEORGE DANDIN, *alone.*

I can't get that fool to do what I want; but this new information which he has let drop may do as well. If the lover is in my house, I can prove it to the eyes of the father and mother and convince them fully of their daughter's effrontery. The worst of it is, I don't know how to make the most of the chance. If I go into the house, that scoundrel will manage to get out of it; and no matter what I see myself of my dishonor, I should n't be believed on oath; they 'd tell me I dreamed it. If, on the other hand, I go and fetch father-in-law and mother-in-law without being sure the lover is there, it will be the same thing over again; I shall only tumble into a scrape just like the last. Could n't I make sure, very softly, if he is in there? (*Looks through the keyhole of the door.*) Ah, heavens! there 's no doubt at all; I see him. Fate gives me a chance to confound my wife; and, bless me! as if to complete the affair, it actually brings the judges whom I want to the very spot.

SCENE NINTH

MADAME AND MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE, GEORGE DANDIN

GEORGE DANDIN.

You would not believe me just now, and your daughter got the better of me; but I now have in my hand the means of showing you how she behaves. Thank God, my dishonor is so plain now that you can't doubt it.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

What, son-in-law, are you still harping upon that?

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes, I am; and I never had better reason to do so.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Are you going to din all that into our ears again?

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes, madame; and my ears are worse treated still.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Are you not weary of making all this trouble?

GEORGE DANDIN.

I am weary of being taken for a dupe.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Will you never get rid of these outrageous ideas?

GEORGE DANDIN.

No madame; but I should like to get rid of a wife who dishonors me.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

For Heaven's sake, son-in-law, learn to speak decently.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Corbleu! choose language less insulting than that.

GEORGE DANDIN.

He who is pushed to the wall does n't pick his words.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Remember that you have married a lady.

GEORGE DANDIN.

I remember that well enough; and shall remember it far too long.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

If you do remember it, be careful to speak of her with respect.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Why is n't she careful to treat me honorably? What! because she is a lady, is she to do what she likes to me, and I not dare to say a word?

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Well, what is it you complain of? What have you to say now? Did you not see and hear this morning how she refused even to know the gentleman about whom you spoke to me?

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes; but what would you say if I made you see that the lover is in my house with her now?

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

With her?

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes, with her, in my house.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

In your house?

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes, in my own house.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

If that is so, we shall be for you against her.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Yes, the honor of our family is more precious to us than all else. If you say true, we shall renounce her as not belonging to our blood, and give her up to your just anger.

GEORGE DANDIN.

You have only to follow me.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Be careful you are not deceived.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Do not make the same mistake you did before.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Heavens! you shall see— (*Pointing to Clitandre who comes out of the house with Angélique*) There! have I lied?

SCENE TENTH

ANGÉLIQUE, CLITANDRE, CLAUDINE, MONSIEUR AND MADAME DE SOTENVILLE, AND GEORGE DANDIN, *at the back of the stage*

ANGÉLIQUE, *to Clitandre.*

Adieu; I am afraid of a surprise; I must be careful.

CLITANDRE.

But promise me, madame, that I may see you again to-night.

ANGÉLIQUE.

I will do my best.

GEORGE DANDIN, *to Monsieur and Madame de Sotenville.*

Let us get nearer to them softly, from behind; and try not to be seen.

CLAUDINE, *to Angélique.*

Ah! madame, all is lost! Here come your father and mother, and your husband.

CLITANDRE.

Heavens!

ANGÉLIQUE, *to Clitandre and Claudine.*

Don't notice them; leave me to manage all. (*Aloud to Clitandre*) What! do you dare to treat me thus after what happened to-day? Is this the way you conceal your feelings? They told me you were in love with me, and had designs upon my virtue. I showed you my displeasure. I explained myself clearly to you before all present. You denied the thing loudly, and gave me your word you had no intention of insulting me; and yet, the very same day, you are bold enough to come here to my house and tell me you love me, and offer me a hundred foolish persuasions to listen to your madness. As if I were a woman to violate my

pledges to my husband, and to abandon forever the virtue in which my parents trained me! If my father knew of this he would teach you to attempt such enterprises. But a modest woman hates scandal; I shall tell him nothing about it; but I will show you (*signing to Claudine to give her a stick*) that I have courage enough, woman as I am, to revenge myself for such an insult. The conduct you have shown is not that of a gentleman, therefore it is not as a gentleman that I treat you. (*Angélique pretends to strike Clitandre, but moves round so that the blows fall on George Dandin.*)

Clitandre, *crying out as if struck, and escaping.*

Ah! ah! ah! gently!

SCENE ELEVENTH

Monsieur and Madame de Sotenville, Angélique, George Dandin, Claudine

Claudine.

Hard, madame, strike hard!

Angélique, *pretending to speak to Clitandre.*

If there is anything more you wish to say I am ready to answer it.

CLAUDINE.

Yes, learn with whom you are dealing!

ANGÉLIQUE, *pretending astonishment.*

Ah, father! you here?

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Yes, my daughter; and I see with what wisdom and courage you show yourself a worthy scion of the house of Sotenville. Come here, my child, and let me embrace you.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Embrace me too, my daughter. Alas! I weep for joy; I recognize my blood in the things I have just heard you say.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Son-in-law, you ought to be happy now. This adventure is full of comfort for you. You had just cause for alarm; but your suspicions are now dispelled in a most admirable manner.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Yes, son-in-law, you will in future be a most contented man.

CLAUDINE.

That 's true! What a wife she is! You are only too lucky to have her, monsieur; you ought to kiss the ground she treads on.

George Dandin, *aside.*

Eugh! traitress!

Monsieur de Sotenville.

What is amiss, son-in-law? Why do you not thank your wife for the affection which you have seen her show for you?

Angélique.

No, no, father; that is not necessary. He is under no obligation to me for what he has just seen. What I did was for my own self-respect.

Monsieur de Sotenville.

Where are you going, my daughter?

Angélique.

I retire, father, to be spared the necessity of receiving his compliments.

Claudine, *to George Dandin.*

She has good reason to be angry; there 's a wife who ought to be adored, and you don't treat her properly.

George Dandin, *aside.*

Wretch!

SCENE TWELFTH

MONSIEUR AND MADAME DE SOTENVILLE, GEORGE DANDIN

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

She feels some resentment about the late affair; but it will all pass off if you caress her a little. Adieu, son-in-law; you are now relieved from all anxiety. Go in, and make peace together; try to pacify her with a few excuses for your anger.

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

You ought to consider that she was a young girl brought up to virtue; who is, therefore, not accustomed to find herself suspected of shameful actions. I am thankful to see your troubles ended; her conduct ought to fill you with transports of joy.

SCENE THIRTEENTH

GEORGE DANDIN, *alone.*

I said nothing, for what should I gain by speaking? Never was anything seen to equal my defeat! Yes, I admire my own misfortune,

and the clever way my jade of a wife manages to put herself in the right. Am I fated to get the worst of it with her? Will appearances always turn against me? Shall I never succeed in convicting that brazen creature? Heaven help my efforts, and grant me grace to prove to every one how she dishonors me.

END OF ACT SECOND.

Act Third

SCENE FIRST

Clitandre, Lubin

Clitandre.

THE night is dark; I am afraid I am late. I can't see where I am going. Lubin!

Lubin.

Monsieur.

Clitandre.

Is this the way?

Lubin.

I think so. Thunder! what a fool of a night it is to be so dark.

Clitandre.

Yes, it is bad; but if it hinders us from seeing, it hinders others from seeing us.

Lubin.

That 's true; so it is n't such a fool after all. I 'd like to know, monsieur, you being so learned, why it is n't daylight at night.

CLITANDRE.

That 's a great question and difficult to solve. So you are thirsting for knowledge, Lubin, hey?

LUBIN.

Yes; if I had gone to school, I should have thought about things nobody has ever thought about before.

CLITANDRE.

I believe you; you look as if you had a subtle and penetrating mind.

LUBIN.

You are right. Why, do you know, I can make out Latin, though I never learned it; the other day, when I saw at the top of a big door the word *Collegium*, I knew at once that meant college.

CLITANDRE.

Wonderful! So you can read, Lubin?

LUBIN.

Yes, I can read printed letters; but I never learned to read writing.

CLITANDRE.

Here we are, close to the house. (*Claps his hands.*) That is the signal Claudine gave me.

LUBIN.

Faith! that girl is worth money. I love her with all my heart.

CLITANDRE.

That 's why I 've brought you — to talk to her.

LUBIN.

I follow you, monsieur.

CLITANDRE.

Hush! I hear a voice.

SCENE SECOND

ANGÉLIQUE, CLAUDINE, CLITANDRE, LUBIN

ANGÉLIQUE.

Claudine!

CLAUDINE.

Well?

ANGÉLIQUE.

Leave the door half-open.

CLAUDINE.

I have.

Night scene; they all try to find one another in the darkness.

CLITANDRE, *to Lubin.*

Here they are! Hist!

ANGÉLIQUE.

Hist!

LUBIN.

Hist!

CLAUDINE.

Hist!

CLITANDRE, *to Claudine, whom he takes for Angélique.*

Madame!

ANGÉLIQUE, *to Lubin, whom she takes for Clitandre.*

What?

LUBIN, *to Angélique, whom he takes for Claudine.*

Claudine!

CLAUDINE, *to Clitandre, whom she takes for Lubin.*

What is it?

CLITANDRE, *to Claudine, thinking he speaks to Angélique.*

Ah! madame, what happiness!

LUBIN, *to Angélique, thinking he speaks to Claudine.*

Ah! Claudine, my dear Claudine!

CLAUDINE, *to Clitandre.*

Gently, monsieur.

ANGÉLIQUE, *to Lubin.*

That will do, Lubin.

CLITANDRE.

Is this you, Claudine?

CLAUDINE.

Yes.

LUBIN.

Is this you, madame?

ANGÉLIQUE.

Yes.

CLAUDINE, *to Clitandre.*

You have taken one for the other.

LUBIN, *to Angélique.*

Faith, it 's so pitch-dark I could n't see.

ANGÉLIQUE.

This is you, Clitandre?

CLITANDRE.

Yes, madame.

ANGÉLIQUE.

My husband is snoring finely, and I have seized this moment for our interview.

CLITANDRE.

Let us find a place to be seated.

CLAUDINE.

Yes, that 's advisable.

Angélique, Clitandre, and Claudine go to the back of the stage and sit down.

LUBIN, *hunting for Claudine.*

Claudine! where are you?

SCENE THIRD

ANGÉLIQUE, CLITANDRE, CLAUDINE, *at the back of the stage,* GEORGE DANDIN, *half-dressed,* LUBIN

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

I heard my wife go down, and I have dressed as fast as I could to follow her. Where can she have gone? She must have left the house.

LUBIN, *hunting for Claudine, takes George Dandin for her.*

Where are you, Claudine? Oh, here you are! Faith, your master is finely fooled now! I think this is quite as funny as that stick business you told me about. Your mistress says

he 's snoring like the deuce upstairs. Ha! he little thinks that she and Monsieur le vicomte are down here together while he 's asleep. I wish I knew what he is dreaming about! Well, it 's laughable! What does he mean by being jealous of a woman, and wanting her all to himself? He is a saucy fellow, and Monsieur le vicomte does him too much honor. Why don't you answer me, Claudine? Come, let 's follow their example; give me your dear little fist, that I may kiss it. Ah! it 's so soft; it is like eating sugarplums — (*George Dandin, whom he takes for Claudine, pushes him away roughly.*) Thunder! how you behave! That little fist of yours is pretty rude.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Who 's there?

LUBIN, *escaping.*

Nobody.

GEORGE DANDIN.

He 's gone! No matter; he has warned me of this new infamy of my rascally wife. I 'll send at once for her father and mother; this affair will certainly entitle me to separate from her. Holà, Colin! Colin!

SCENE FOURTH

Angélique, Clitandre, Claudine, Lubin, *back*, George Dandin, Colin

Colin, *at a window.*

Monsieur!

George Dandin.

Come down here, quick!

Colin, *jumping out of the window.*

Here I am; could n't come quicker.

George Dandin.

Are you there?

Colin.

Yes, monsieur. (*While George Dandin searches for him on the side where he hears his voice, Colin crosses to the other side, sits down and drops asleep.*)

George Dandin (*speaking to the side where he thinks Colin is*).

Softly; speak low. Listen. Go to my father-in-law and mother-in-law, and say I want them to come here immediately. Do you hear? — immediately. Hey! Colin! Colin!

Colin, *on the other side, waking up.*

Monsieur!

GEORGE DANDIN.

Where the devil are you?

COLIN.

Here.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Confound that booby! what is he doing over there? (*While George Dandin goes to the side where he hears Colin's voice, Colin, half-awake crosses to the other side, sits down, and drops asleep again.*) I tell you to go at once and find my father-in-law and mother-in-law, and say I conjure them to come instantly; do you hear me? — instantly. Answer. Colin! Colin!

COLIN, *on the other side, waking up.*

Monsieur!

GEORGE DANDIN.

That rascal will put me in a rage! Come here, I say! (*They meet violently, and both fall down.*) Ah! the traitor, he has cracked my skull. Where are you? I do believe he is trying to avoid me.

COLIN.

Of course I am.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Come here!

COLIN.

No, not I!

GEORGE DANDIN.

Come, I say.

COLIN.

No, you want to strike me.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Well there! no! I won't hurt you.

COLIN.

Certain, sure?

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes. Come here. Good. (*Takes him by the arm.*) Lucky for you I want your services. Go at once to my father-in-law and my mother-in-law, and tell them to come here as soon as they possibly can. Say it is for a matter of the utmost consequence; and if they make any difficulty on account of the hour, tell them it is very important they should come, no matter in what state they are. Do you understand me this time?

COLIN.

Yes, monsieur.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Go quickly, and come back as fast as you can. (*Thinking himself alone*) As for me, I shall return to the house and wait until — But I hear some one. Can it be my wife? I must listen. Luckily the darkness helps me. (*Stands close to the wall of the house.*)

SCENE FIFTH

ANGÉLIQUE, CLITANDRE, CLAUDINE, LUBIN, GEORGE DANDIN

ANGÉLIQUE, *to Clitandre.*

Adieu; it is time to part.

CLITANDRE.

What! so soon?

ANGÉLIQUE.

You have been with me long enough.

CLITANDRE.

Ah! madame, can I ever be with you long enough? Do these short interviews give me time to say all that I desire? I need whole days to fully express what I feel. I have not yet said to you one half that is in my mind.

ANGÉLIQUE.

We shall have other opportunities.

CLITANDRE.

Alas! you stab me to the heart when you talk of leaving me; with what grief shall I lose you now!

ANGÉLIQUE.

We will find means to meet again.

CLITANDRE.

Yes; but when I reflect that in leaving me you return to a husband, the mere thought kills me; the privileges of a husband are cruel things to a lover.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Are you so foolish as to make yourself uneasy on that score? Do you imagine that women are capable of loving certain husbands that I know of? We take them because we must; we are forced to obey our parents, who have no eyes except for money; but we know how to do full justice on our husbands; and we scorn to treat them otherwise than as they deserve.

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

The jades! these are our wives!

CLITANDRE.

It must be admitted on all sides that the man they have given you is little worthy of the

honor he received. It is a strange thing indeed that they should ever have mated a woman like you to a man like him.

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

Poor husbands! this is how you are looked upon!

CLITANDRE.

You deserve a better fate; Heaven never made you to be the wife of a peasant.

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

Would to God she were your wife! — you 'd change your language then! I have heard enough; I shall go in. (*Goes into the house and locks the door behind him.*)

SCENE SIXTH

ANGÉLIQUE, CLITANDRE, CLAUDINE, LUBIN

CLAUDINE.

Madame, if you have any harm to say of your husband, say it quickly; for it is very late.

CLITANDRE.

Ah! Claudine, how cruel you are!

ANGÉLIQUE.

She is right; let us part.

CLITANDRE.

I must submit, as you demand it. But, at least, I conjure you to pity me for the dismal hours that I must pass alone.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Adieu.

LUBIN.

Where are you, Claudine, that I may say good-night?

CLAUDINE.

Go, go! say it at a distance, and I'll say back.

SCENE SEVENTH

ANGÉLIQUE, CLAUDINE

ANGÉLIQUE.

Let us get in without the slightest noise.

CLAUDINE.

Madame, the door is locked!

ANGÉLIQUE.

I have a pass-key.

CLAUDINE.

Open it softly.

ANGÉLIQUE.

The door is bolted within! What shall we do?

CLAUDINE.

Call Colin, who sleeps below.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Colin! Colin! Colin!

SCENE EIGHTH

GEORGE DANDIN, ANGÉLIQUE, CLAUDINE

GEORGE DANDIN, *at the window.*

Colin! Colin! indeed. Ah ha! so I have caught you, my lady-wife? You are playing pranks while you think me asleep? I am glad of it, and glad to see you out there at this time of night.

ANGÉLIQUE.

And pray, where 's the harm of my going out for a breath of the cool night air.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Oh, yes! it is such a proper hour to be getting fresh air! It is something warmer than that, my wife, that you have been after. I know all about your rendezvous with that popinjay. I

overheard your gallant conversation and the pretty things you both said in my honor. One comfort is, I can now be avenged. Your father and mother can't fail this time to be convinced of the justice of my complaints and the profligacy of your conduct. I have sent for them, and they will be here in a moment.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Oh, heavens!

CLAUDINE.

Madame!

GEORGE DANDIN.

This is a stroke that you doubtless did not expect. Now comes my triumph; I have it in my power to bring down your pride, and defeat your artful tricks. Until now you have foiled my accusations, hoodwinked your parents, and whitewashed your evil deeds. No matter what I saw, or what I said, your wiliness has got the better of my facts; you have always found means to put me in the wrong. But this time, thank God, the truth is going to be made plain, and your barefaced effrontery will be fully exposed.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Ah! I beg of you to open the door.

GEORGE DANDIN.

No, no; you must wait for the arrival of those I have sent for. I wish them to find you out there at this time of night. But while you are waiting you can be turning over in your head some new trick to get you out of the affair. Yes, you can be inventing some means to explain your performance, some sly way to elude us and seem innocent, — the specious pretext of a nocturnal pilgrimage, or, maybe, a friend in childbirth who wants your help!

ANGÉLIQUE.

No; I do not wish to hide my conduct; I shall not attempt to defend myself, nor to deny the things you know.

GEORGE DANDIN.

That is because you see all other ways are closed to you; you know there is no excuse that you can invent which I cannot easily prove false.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Yes, I confess I have done wrong; you have reason to complain. But I ask you, in mercy, not to expose me to my parents' anger, but to open the door at once.

GEORGE DANDIN.

No, I thank you.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Ah! my poor little husband! I entreat you!

GEORGE DANDIN.

Ah! my poor little husband! Yes, I'm your poor little husband because you feel yourself caught. I am glad of it; you never said such sweet things to me before.

ANGÉLIQUE.

I promise to give you no further cause for complaint and —

GEORGE DANDIN.

That has nothing to do with it. I shall not lose my chance now. It is very important for me that your parents shall know, once for all, what your behavior has been.

ANGÉLIQUE.

For pity's sake, let me speak with you — only one moment.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Well, say on; what is it?

ANGÉLIQUE.

It is true that I have done wrong; I acknowledge it once more; your anger is just; I took

the time when I knew you were asleep to come out to a rendezvous, and that rendezvous was an appointment I had with the person you have named. But this is a wrong you ought to forgive to one of my age; it was the folly of a girl who has seen nothing of the world she has just entered; who has used her liberty without a thought of harm; and in her heart is not —

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes, so you say; but those are things that need n't be religiously believed.

ANGÉLIQUE.

I do not seek to excuse myself for the wrong I have done you; I only ask you to forget an offence for which I ask your pardon with all my heart, and to spare me the grief which the angry reproaches of my father and mother will cause me. If you will generously grant the pardon I ask, this great goodness, this kindness, will win me wholly; it will touch my heart, and give birth to sentiments which neither my parents' power nor the bonds of marriage could make me feel for you. In a word, you will bring me to renounce all coquetry and I shall feel attachment to you alone. Yes, I give you my word you shall

in future find me the best of wives, and I will show you such love, such love, that you will indeed be satisfied.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Crocodile! — cajoling men to strangle them.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Grant me this kindness!

GEORGE DANDIN.

No; I am inexorable.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Be generous!

GEORGE DANDIN.

No.

ANGÉLIQUE.

For mercy's sake!

GEORGE DANDIN

Never.

ANGÉLIQUE.

I implore you with all my strength.

GEORGE DANDIN.

No, no, no. I am determined that your father and mother shall be undeceived about you, and that your shame shall confound you.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Well, then, since you reduce me to despair, I warn you that a woman in that condition is capable of everything, and I shall do something that you will repent of.

GEORGE DANDIN.

What will you do, pray?

ANGÉLIQUE.

My courage will go to the utmost limits of resolution, and with this knife I will kill myself where I stand.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Ha! ha! ha! well and good!

ANGÉLIQUE.

Not so well and good for you as you imagine. People know of our quarrels and the perpetual irritation you show against me. When I am found dead no one will doubt you have killed me; and my parents are not, most assuredly, persons who would let my murder go unpunished; they would inflict upon you the full penalty of the law and their own resentment. In that way, I shall be revenged upon you. I am not the first woman to have recourse to such vengeance; others have not shrunk from killing

themselves to destroy men who are cruel enough to drive them to such extremities.

GEORGE DANDIN.

I am not taken in by that. People don't kill themselves in these days. That fashion went out long ago.

ANGÉLIQUE.

You may be certain that I shall do it; and if you persist in your refusal to open that door I swear that I will instantly show you to what lengths a woman can go when she is driven to desperation.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Stuff and nonsense! you are only trying to frighten me.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Alas, then! since I must, this will end the matter and show if I am deceiving you (*pretending to stab herself*). Pray Heaven my death may be avenged as I desire; and that he who caused it may receive the just punishment for his cruelty to me!

GEORGE DANDIN.

Goodness! can she be so malicious as to have really killed herself to get me hanged? I'll take a light, and see (*takes a candle*).

SCENE NINTH

ANGÉLIQUE, CLAUDINE

ANGÉLIQUE, *to Claudine.*

Hist! we must stand close to the door, one on each side of it.

SCENE TENTH

ANGÉLIQUE, CLAUDINE, GEORGE DANDIN, *coming out with a candle in his hand. As he comes out Angélique and Claudine slip in, and lock the door behind them.*

GEORGE DANDIN, *candle in hand.*

The wickedness of woman can't go so far. (*Looks about on all sides.*) There 's no one here. Hey! I thought as much; the jade has taken herself off, finding that she can get nothing out of me either by tears or threats. So much the better! it only makes matters worse for her; and the father and mother, who 'll be here in a minute, will be all the more convinced of her sin. (*Goes to the door and tries to enter.*) Ha! the door is locked. Holà, ho! Some one! Open the door at once!

SCENE ELEVENTH

ANGÉLIQUE AND CLAUDINE *at the window*, GEORGE DANDIN

ANGÉLIQUE.

What! is that you? Where do you come from, you old drunkard? Is this a proper hour to be coming home? Why, it is nearly daylight. Do you think this the sort of life a decent husband ought to lead?

GEORGE DANDIN.

What! do you —

ANGÉLIQUE.

Go! go! you wretch; I am tired of your behavior. I shall complain at once to my father and mother.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Is it possible that you dare —

SCENE TWELFTH

MONSIEUR AND MADAME DE SOTENVILLE, *in night-clothes and dressing-gowns*, COLIN, *with a lantern*, ANGÉLIQUE AND CLAUDINE *at the window*, GEORGE DANDIN

ANGÉLIQUE, *to Monsieur and Madame de Sotenville.*

For Heaven's sake come here and protect me from the greatest insolence in the world, — from a husband whose brain is so turned by wine and jealousy that he knows neither what he says nor what he does. He has brought you out of your beds to witness the most extravagant follies that you ever heard of. Here he is returning, as you see, after being absent the whole night, and yet, if you listen to him, he will make all sorts of complaints about me; he will tell you that while he was asleep I slipped out, and a hundred other things that he has dreamt.

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

The wicked slut!

CLAUDINE.

Yes, he tried to make believe he was in the house and we were outside; it is a crack-brained idea we could n't get out of his head.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

What does all this mean?

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Such horrible impudence! — to send for us here!

GEORGE DANDIN.

Never —

ANGÉLIQUE.

No, father; I can no longer endure such a husband. My patience is exhausted. He has been saying the most insulting things to me.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE, *to George Dandin.*

Corbleu! you are a most ill-bred man.

CLAUDINE.

It is a dreadful thing to see a poor young wife so used. It cries to Heaven for vengeance.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Can you —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

You ought to die of shame.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Let me say two words to you.

ANGÉLIQUE.

You have only to listen to him — he 'll tell you fine tales.

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

Hopeless to say a word!

CLAUDINE.

He has drunk so much it is sickening to be near him; the smell of his breath comes up here.

GEORGE DANDIN, *to Monsieur de Sotenville.*

Monsieur, I entreat you —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Retire, if you please; you are offensive from the wine you have drunk.

GEORGE DANDIN, *to Madame de Sotenville.*

Madame, I beg of you —

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Fie! don't come nearer; your breath is pestiferous.

GEORGE DANDIN, *to Monsieur de Sotenville.*

Allow me to —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Retire, I say; your presence is intolerable.

GEORGE DANDIN, *to Madame de Sotenville.*

For Heaven's sake, permit me to —

MADAME DE SOTENVILLE.

Faugh! you sicken me. Speak at a distance — if you must speak.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Yes, I 'll speak at a distance. I swear that I have never stirred from my house; and it was she who left it.

ANGÉLIQUE, *to her father.*

What did I tell you?

CLAUDINE.

See how barefaced he is!

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE, *to George Dandin.*

You are trying to make fools of us. (*To Angélique*) Come down here, my daughter.

SCENE THIRTEENTH

MONSIEUR AND MADAME DE SOTENVILLE, GEORGE DANDIN, COLIN

GEORGE DANDIN.

I swear to Heaven I was in the house, and—

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Be silent! this folly is not to be endured.

GEORGE DANDIN.

May the lightning blast me if —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Do not deafen our ears with this thing any longer. You must now ask pardon of your wife.

GEORGE DANDIN.

I! ask pardon?

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Yes, pardon; instantly.

GEORGE DANDIN.

What! am I —

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Corbleu! if you answer me, I'll teach you what it is to trick a family like ours.

GEORGE DANDIN, *aside.*

Ah! George Dandin! fool that you are!

SCENE FOURTEENTH

MONSIEUR AND MADAME DE SOTENVILLE, ANGÉLIQUE, CLAUDINE, GEORGE DANDIN, COLIN

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Come, my daughter, and let your husband ask your pardon.

ANGÉLIQUE.

I! pardon him for what he dared to say to me? No, no, father; I can never bring myself to that. I beg you to separate me from a husband with whom it is impossible for me to live.

CLAUDINE.

You cannot refuse her.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

My daughter, such separations are never made without great scandal. You must show yourself wiser and better than he; and be patient with him.

ANGÉLIQUE.

Patient! after such indignities! No, father, that is a thing to which I cannot consent.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

You must, my daughter; I command you to obey me.

ANGÉLIQUE.

That word will close my lips; you have all power over me.

CLAUDINE.

What gentleness!

ANGÉLIQUE.

Though it is hard to forget such injuries, still, at any cost, I will obey you.

CLAUDINE.

Poor lamb!

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE, *to Angélique.*

Come nearer.

ANGÉLIQUE.

All that you say will be of no avail; to-morrow he will do the same thing over again.

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

I shall see to that. (*To George Dandin*) Come, kneel down.

GEORGE DANDIN.

Kneel down?

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Yes, on your knees, instantly.

GEORGE DANDIN, *on his knees, candle in hand.*

(*Aside*) Oh! heavens! (*To Monsieur de Sotenville*) What am I to say?

MONSIEUR DE SOTENVILLE.

Madame, I beg you to pardon me —

GEORGE DANDIN.

Madame, I beg you to pardon me —

Monsieur de Sotenville.

The folly I have committed —

George Dandin.

The folly I have committed (*aside*) in marrying you.

Monsieur de Sotenville.

And I promise to live better in future —

George Dandin.

And I promise to live better in future.

Monsieur de Sotenville, *to George Dandin.*

Be careful to keep that promise; for this is the last insolence on your part that we shall overlook.

Madame de Sotenville.

If you do such things again you will be taught the respect which you owe to your wife and to those from whom she issues.

Monsieur de Sotenville.

The day is dawning. (*To George Dandin*) Go in; and strive in future to be a better man. (*To Madame de Sotenville*) Come, my love, let us go back to bed again.

SCENE FIFTEENTH

George Dandin, *alone.*

Ah! I give it all up now! I see no remedy. When a man has, like me, married a wicked wife the best thing he can do is to fling himself into the nearest pond head foremost.

END OF GEORGE DANDIN AND VOLUME SECOND.

OCT 1 9 1942